

Days of History

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# The Turn- ing Point



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Amazingly, just two years after perestroika was launched, more and more people began to say they were sick and tired of stories exposing Stalin's rule. They say they are appalled to read about Stalin\* in just about every issue of *Ogonyok*\*\* and hear of him on many television programmes. In explaining their attitude they find catchy phrases like: you can't move onward with your face turned backward. And then, they say, everything is clear now—too much has been written about all that...

But how much is too much?

There were some 25 years of shameless lies, tireless toadyism and high praise—the whole period of Stalin's rule, from the late 1920s to the early 1950s. For 25 years, a whole generation was brainwashed—and no one said they were sick and tired. Then, after a decade of timid half-truths, the truth was again suppressed for another 20 years. This time, the methods of suppression were not so cruel as they had been under Stalin: for several years, "the father of the peoples" was not mentioned in the media at all, as if he had never existed.

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\* Joseph Stalin (Dzhugashvili) (1879-1953) joined the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1898.

\*\* *Ogonyok* is an illustrated weekly devoted to socio-political, literary, and cultural affairs. Founded in Moscow in 1923, it reached a circulation of 3.2 million copies in 1989.

For nearly six decades, the nation's consciousness and its knowledge about its own not-so-remote history were obscured by all sorts of nonsense. The nonsense really began to be removed as late as November 1987. Yes, a full-scale programme to that effect was launched in November 1987, even though glasnost had begun in 1985. Glasnost and dedicated journalists are not all it takes to expose Stalinism. It was not enough to expose the lies featured in novels and movies, schoolbooks and press materials. Some of the Stalinist falsehoods were incorporated in the Communist Party's policy documents, which remained in force until the Party itself ruled they were to be disregarded. Therefore, a comprehensive, candid and scientific analysis of the not-so-remote past became possible only after the Soviet leader delivered his report marking the 70th anniversary of the 1917 Socialist Revolution (the report's theses had been approved by the Communist Party Central Committee shortly before).

What has been accomplished during this brief period of glasnost which followed a long night of silence and falsehood? Quite a lot, we can say, and still very little.

A good deal has been done, much more than during the "thaw" of the late 1950s and the early 1960s. First, the prerequisites have been created for altering the entire atmosphere in society. They have been created by the policy of glasnost, by the revision of the Party's assessments of certain periods of Soviet history, and by the work of the Politburo's Commission for the revision of repression cases. Second, those prerequisites have been utilized, and there have been unprecedented changes in society.

Still very little has been done. We still don't know the exact total of the victims of Stalin's lawless rule. Not all of those convicted without a fair trial have been exonerated, and the Politburo's Commission still has a great deal of work to do. Not all those exonerated and their families have got back their lawful rights. Not all the archives have been opened to historians. And then, it should be noted that opening archives is not like opening a store; it takes years to find the really

valuable documents. After a great number of books falsifying the Communist Party's history, a truthful one is yet to be written. We are only beginning to publish the works by previously banned thinkers; the nation is just beginning to explore the huge amount of cultural and intellectual values that were concealed from it for a long, long time. No monument has been erected in memory of the victims of Stalin's rule. The weakness of what has been accomplished is that it has affected public attitudes rather than public consciousness. A development which is very important, but not irreversible.

After decades of disinformation, it takes at least a few years to restore the truth and to learn to absorb it. This, however, is just the beginning of what must be done. Learning historical facts which were previously concealed is less than half the battle. It is much more important and much more difficult to apprehend new facts. That task was not accomplished in the first anti-Stalinist tide following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party (in 1956). The questions we are trying to answer today were first formulated more than 30 years ago.

First of all, attention is now focussed on the issue of historical alternatives to Stalinism. Was there another opportunity open to the nation? If there was, why wasn't it utilized? In other words, to what extent was Stalinism the result of objective and to what extent, subjective factors? The political importance of these questions is obvious, and it is also obvious that the answers to them are not easy to find. Indeed, if there was no choice, if the path of huge sacrifices had been objectively predetermined—Stalin would have to be acquitted of his crimes. But if this path was not predetermined (as most historians tend to believe), then a very complex concept of history is needed to provide a trustworthy explanation of what happened.

Historians were just beginning to develop concept of history when another trend emerged striving to add another dimension (which was not really new) to the debate. Some historians claim that Stalin did not deviate from the Marxist-

Leninist revolutionary doctrine and that we lack the courage to admit that Stalin implemented exactly what Lenin's party had planned.

Let us sum up Stalin's accomplishments. Stalin torpedoed Lenin's policy of creating a "link" between the working class and the peasantry, replaced the voluntary establishment of agricultural cooperatives with a policy of forced collectivization in agriculture, and dispossessed and exiled millions of peasants (both the richer ones and others), many of whom died in exile. The first five-year plan was not carried out and the industrialization slowed because of Stalin's "stimulatory" measures. After the collectivization programme was completed, several million peasants were killed by a famine which hardly had any justification. Stalin launched lawless repressions against millions of Soviet people from all sectors of society, including most of the best intellectuals, many Party leaders and statesmen and military and security officers. Stalin is responsible for the assassination of many Comintern activists and the leaders of the Communist Parties of many countries. He exiled entire nationalities to faraway places. He torpedoed the formation of a united anti-fascist front in Western Europe and made efforts to set Communists against Social-Democrats. This is quite sufficient, even though this list of Stalin's crimes is far from complete.

We were taught in school that "Stalin is the Lenin of today." This was meant as praise, of course. Today, some historians claim that "Stalin was an adequate exponent of Marxism-Leninism of his time." They identify Stalinism with Marxism-Leninism not to flatter Stalin, but to denounce Marxism-Leninism. One distortion of the historical retrospective is supplemented by another, with the same result that Stalin is blameless.

If we want to obtain scientific conclusions, we should remember that scientific analysis deals with facts and that the most intricate hypothesis can be called a theory only if it is substantiated with facts. Therefore, I propose that we patiently examine a number of documents.



This book examines, first, how Stalin killed Lenin's plan of social development in the late 1920s and what that led to. Second, it will provide explanations as to how he managed to do this. And third, it will analyse the correlation between Stalinism and Marxism-Leninism.

Most of this book was written in 1972, when there was no hope of it being published. The huge amount of materials made available at this era of glasnost would have certainly helped to fill many gaps in my analysis. A substantial revision of the book, however, would put off its publication indefinitely and, another thing, it would disrupt the fulfilment of an extra plan, a sort of overall task, that I hope I have managed to fulfil. In 1972, I set myself the task of disproving major neo-Stalinist myths without using any archive materials, any materials printed by unofficial self-styled publishers in the USSR, foreign publications or any other materials closed to the general public. I only used sources which were available even in the 1960s and the 1970s and were obtainable at any decent library. The one exception are some works by Bukharin, which were not available to the public in those days but are open to everybody today.

I wish to adhere to the principle of quoting sources that were open to the public even before the era of glasnost. So I changed very little as I prepared my manuscript for publication. The few things I did add are mainly in the final chapter: the years when the manuscript was shelved ("the peak of the stagnation period") added a great deal to the picture of the economic wreck caused by the prolonged functioning of the managerial mechanism created under Stalin.

Now let us examine the documents.

## Stalin Acting Against Stalin

An individual can hardly cause change in times when there is a marked imbalance of social forces, when one force is clearly stronger than others. Probably no single individual could have stopped the popular uprising against Russia's Provisional Government in late 1917, after that government showed its inability and reluctance to give land to peasants, food to workers, and peace to everyone (those were the goals of the revolution of February 1917). This is well illustrated by the case of Kamenev and Zinoviev,\* who had a great

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\* Lev Kamenev (Rozenfeld) (1883-1936) joined the Communist Party in 1901.

Grigori Zinoviev (Radomyslsky) (1883-1936) joined the Communist Party in 1901.

When the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks)—RSDLP (B)—discussed the issue of an armed uprising on October 23, 1917, Zinoviev and Kamenev spoke against staging it at that time. As their proposal was defeated, the next day they made a statement to the Central Committee and conveyed a letter entitled "On the Current Situation." In that letter, they reiterated their objections against the Central Committee's decision to stage an armed uprising. The letter was read to an enlarged meeting of the Petrograd Committee on October 28, but received no support. The result was the same at an enlarged meeting of the Party's Central Committee on October 29. In an article published in the daily *Novaya Zhizn* on October 31, Kamenev outlined his own and Zinoviev's objections against the staging of an armed uprising, thereby disclosing the Party's secret decision.

deal of personal influence. Popular sentiment in favour of the uprising, however, was so strong that even the most influential persons who selected to disregard it found themselves in isolation. A majority of the Party Central Committee members felt so strongly against Kamenev's and Zinoviev's proposal that we can assume that Kamenev and Zinoviev would have never gained a majority vote in favour of their proposal, even if Lenin (1870-1924) had failed for some reason to influence the vote. Moreover, even if their proposal had been adopted and the Bolsheviks decided not to lead the uprising, its leadership would have been assumed by the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the anarchists, or some other political forces, but the uprising would have been staged just the same.

But suppose there are two mutually opposed trends, each enjoying such powerful social support that there is a rough balance of strength. In this case, it sometimes takes just one strong personality to tip the scale in favour of one or the other trend. That was the case when the Brest Peace Treaty was discussed. Suppose circumstances had prevented Lenin from participating in that discussion and influencing the decision, then the opponents of the peace treaty would probably have got the upper hand. For some time, they held a majority in the Central Committee—a majority that was stronger than Lenin's authority and convincing ability. It took some time to convince the Party that the peace treaty had to be concluded (Soviet Russia was forced to sign the treaty on worse terms because of the delay) and Lenin even threatened to resign as he addressed the Party's Congress—and he did win several votes (but he never resorted to that threat again). This example shows how in some situations a single personality can lead the whole Party onto the right track, provided that the person's own position is correct and he works hard enough to advocate it.

An unstable balance was inevitably created, not for a short period of time, but for a long one, **by the plan for a transition to socialism known as the New Economic Policy.\*** For decades—before a new working class emerged in Russia—the majority of the country's population comprised the peasantry, which was not aware of its interest in a socialist future. The working class had political power, of course, but that power would not have been much good if it had been used to suppress the peasants—so only a policy of alliance was acceptable. If pursued long enough, that policy would inevitably have produced petty-bourgeois influence on the working class itself. The inherent dangers could be avoided only if there was complete unanimity among the “personalities”—in the Party's upper echelon. At that time, an extremely important role was played not by millions, but by thousands of people—Bolsheviks who joined the Party before the Socialist Revolution—and even by just a few individuals—the Party's top leaders.

How was it possible to keep afloat until there was a strong working class? How to avoid degeneration and other dangers? The small-scale peasant economy was regenerating capitalism “every day and every hour.” The thin layer of industrial workers had become even thinner after World War One (1914-1918). Who could protect the workers from all-penetrating petty-bourgeois influence? There was only one answer—the Party could. But who would protect the Party? The agenda of the 11th Party Congress, the last one attended by Lenin, included a report on Party development as a

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\* The New Economic Policy (NEP) was the policy pursued by the Soviet State during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism to overcome the economic dislocation, to consolidate the alliance between the working class and the toiling peasantry on an economic basis, to link socialist industry with small-scale commodity agriculture through extensive use of commodity-money relations, and to involve the peasantry in socialist construction.

special item. The report said that Bolsheviks who had joined the Party before February 1917 totalled two per cent of its membership.

Just two per cent, but they were steadfast persons with enormous political experience, and they held all the key positions in the Party and government. They were to lead the ship of the revolution through the most severe storms. Only after those storms could the importance of an individual or several individuals to determine the success of the nation's cause be reduced to the norm. But were the several thousand people, who comprised the Party's top-level echelon, able to accomplish this task? Yes, they were, if they didn't hinder each other. Hence the concern about the Party's unity expressed in all of Lenin's last works written throughout 1923. That is why Lenin wrote his "**testament.**" That was an attempt to more closely examine the Party's top leaders, whose role was of paramount importance. In the *Letter to the Congress* Lenin wrote about **Trotsky, Stalin, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin, and Pyatakov.\***

Just four years later, Trotsky lived in exile and Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Pyatakov were expelled from the Party; after another two years, Trotsky was expelled from the USSR and Bukharin was deprived of any significant authority. None of the senior leaders was in Stalin's way any more. Stalin became the only ruler as early as the later 1920s. Repressions in the 1930s did not mean that Stalin seized power, they only meant that he strengthened the power he had seized before—he eliminated all possibility of rivalry. How did he eliminate his rivals?

The most dramatic fight, in which Stalin routed his last rival (the last man of the six mentioned by Lenin),

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\* Leon Trotsky (Bronstein) (1879-1940) joined the Social-Democratic movement in 1897. Nikolai Bukharin (1888-1938) joined the Party in 1906. Georgi Pyatakov (1890-1937) joined the Party in 1910.

was the campaign against the so-called Right-wing deviation launched after the 15th Party Congress (in December 1927) and completed by the 16th Congress (in 1930). That period is of special interest not only because it brought absolute power to Stalin or because the rivals he defeated were outstanding and influential politicians (Bukharin was a Politburo member, the leader of the Comintern, *Pravda*'s editor-in-chief, the Party's most prominent theoretician and favourite; Rykov\* was a Politburo member and Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, who succeeded Lenin in that post; Tomsy\* became a Politburo member when Lenin was still alive, he later was Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions). It is interesting to examine the distribution of roles in that fight.

The first man of the six enumerated by Lenin who was defeated was Trotsky. He was the first to launch an attack against the Party's Politburo and Central Committee. He was so self-confident and had so much authority because of his accomplishments in the two revolutions and the recent Civil War that he challenged all the other leaders and even the Party's policy worked out by its Congress when Lenin was still alive and pursued unanimously by the Party's Central Committee. Trotsky banked on his personal authority—and lost. Incidentally, his main opponents were Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Their turn came 18 months later. They moved against Stalin and Bukharin, who then headed a majority at the Party's Central Committee. Once again, the initial move was made by the opposition activists. They criticized the Party's policy concerning major socio-economic issues, which had been unanimously approved at the previous Party Congress, Party

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\* Alexei Rykov (1881-1938) joined the Party in 1899. Mikhail Tomsy (1880-1936) joined the Party in 1904.

Conference, and Central Committee meetings (it just didn't seem right to come out with a proposal to change the Party's leaders)—and they were defeated. Later they allied with Trotsky, whom they had previously moved against, in what clearly was a losing battle, with the result that by the 15th Congress all the three were expelled first from the Politburo, some time later—from the Central Committee, and finally, from the Party (along with Georgi Pyatakov, who then occupied less important posts).

As for Bukharin, he formed no opposition groups, so he was accused of "*deviation*." Bukharin made no moves against the Party's policy; on the contrary, he advocated the course charted by the previous Party Congress. To strike against Bukharin was to strike against the Party's policy course. On previous occasions, anyone who did so was inevitably defeated. But Stalin managed to alter the Party's policy between two Party Congresses, so that Bukharin no longer stood on the Party's platform, although he remained where he had been.

From 1923, when Lenin ceased to be an active leader, to the end of 1927, including the 15th Congress, Stalin firmly advocated the New Economic Policy, which Lenin had initiated. That policy had to be defended in bitter fighting against really strong opponents, but Stalin and Bukharin (two of the six men mentioned in Lenin's letter) invariably advocated Lenin's positions. What is more, Bukharin did really commit certain errors in the process, was criticized for them and had to acknowledge his errors, but Stalin apparently did not commit a single error. Stalin seemed to be standing strong and steady; all his hesitations and errors had been left in the past, when Lenin had been around and was in a position to set anyone right. All the more astonishing is the U-turn that Stalin made in 1928.

The main issues over which Stalin fought and de-

feated the "Right deviationists" were the rate of the country's industrialization (that is, the discussion of targets for the first five-year plan) and collectivization in agriculture, and the methods to be employed in implementing the two programmes. Early in 1929, the State Planning Committee submitted to the Council of People's Commissars two drafts which were essentially similar from a political point of view; they mirrored the same approach, but one was much tougher than the other. The figures in one draft, termed the optimum plan, exceeded the figures in the other one, termed the starting-point plan, by about 20 per cent. In other words, what could be accomplished in five years according to the optimum plan would take six years if the starting-point plan was adopted.

Gleb Krzhizhanovsky (1872-1959), Chairman of the State Planning Committee, at first refused to assume responsibility for the fulfilment of the optimum plan. He explained that the two plans set the limits within which all the targets reached would be good enough. He believed that the starting-point plan would be fulfilled by all means, and if we hit some of the targets under the optimum plan it would be only to our advantage.

Later, however, the more modest of the two plans was no longer called the starting-point plan; instead, it was called the "*minimum*" plan, the opportunist plan and even the enemy plan. After a single discussion, the Council of People's Commissars approved the *optimum* plan as the only possibility. In April 1929, the optimum plan was approved without much discussion by the 16th Party Conference, on the basis of three unanimous reports delivered by Rykov, Krzhizhanovsky, and Kuibyshev\* (then Chairman of the Supreme Council of the National Economy). In accordance with the Conference's decisions, the first five-year plan was

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\* Valerian Kuibyshev (1888-1935) joined the Party in 1904.



then adopted by the Fifth Congress of Soviets of the USSR. But that was still not the whole story. First, the Party's Central Committee, the Council of People's Commissars, and the Central Executive Committee of the USSR passed a number of resolutions, raising the targets for the production of pig iron, oil, tractors, and other agricultural machines, and the electrification of railroads. (The 16th Party Congress even included a special provision about the pig-iron target in one of its resolutions.) Second, a slogan was invented calling on the nation to *accomplish in four years what was planned for five*. The slogan was adopted as a national goal, but later a decision was made to work even faster. As he outlined targets set for the year 1931 to the Central Executive Committee, Molotov\* said that the industrial output was to grow by 45 per cent (instead of the previously planned 22 per cent). One month later, in February 1931, Stalin told the first national conference of industrial workers that the fulfilment of that target would mean that the major targets of the five-year plan would be reached within three years. By that time, a decision was adopted to change the limits of the production year, so that it should commence on January 1st and end on December 31st. In January 1933, the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) held a joint meeting, where it was announced that the five-year plan had been fulfilled within four years and three months. Therefore, in accordance with the original plan, the business year between October 1st, 1932 and September 30th, 1933 was to be the final year of the five-year period, but in fact the final year was the calendar year 1932.

It is impossible to assess in brief the industrial

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\* Vyacheslav Molotov (Skriabin) (1890-1986) joined the Party in 1906.

growth during 1929-1933. History books say that the targets of the first five-year plan were reached in four years and three months. Fewer books specify that the nation's gross industrial output in that period totalled only 93.7 per cent of the target. Well, that means that the target was not quite reached, but the actual figure is impressive, especially since the period under review was considerably shorter than five years. However, one must be very cautious in dealing with gross output figures. Their significance should not be played down, nor should it be exaggerated. First, one can hardly judge how the figures were affected by the growth of wholesale prices, openly noted in many Soviet economic surveys. Second, and more importantly perhaps, the expression of industrial output in monetary terms has no absolute value, especially if one considers the unheard-of changes in the structure of industry that took place in those years. New industries that had not existed in 1928—automobile industry, tractor building, aircraft industry, agricultural machine building, and petrochemical industry—accounted for much of the 1932 output. It is known that the final figures expressing industrial growth in 1929-1933 were greatly influenced by the figures expressing the output of machine building, especially industrial equipment and machine tools manufactured. If we compare the economic indices covering the output of those industries with the indices used when those industries simply did not exist, the only information we get is that an aircraft is a larger unit of gross industrial output than a cart. Gross-volume indices, however, have only a relative value when quantity is being assessed: it had to be established just how much the nation's gross industrial output grew if the nation manufactured a hundred aircraft instead of a hundred carts. The very manner of putting the question (whether the target was reached or not) called for an assessment of the overall volume. To obtain a com-

prehensive and trustworthy answer to that question, it is necessary to assess the output of the major industries not only in terms of value but also in the amounts of products manufactured.

Let us see what happened to target figures for pig iron. This is not a random choice: pig iron was then the number-one issue in any political argument. Metals symbolized industrial might, and as the USSR's metal resources were small, its might largely depended on pig iron. The initial target was to produce seven million tons of iron in the last year of the five-year period; the optimum target (which was adopted at first) was 10 million tons, and the 16th Congress raised this figure to 17 million tons. In point of fact, 6.2 million tons of pig iron was produced in 1932—an unheard-of accomplishment in comparison with the 3.3 million tons of 1928, but it showed how unrealistic Stalin had been in fixing targets for the first five-year plan; the actual achievement was very close to the initial target.

The same happened to all other volume indices. It was planned to raise the production of tractors to 53,000, and later the figure was changed to 170,000; the figure achieved was 49,000. The original target for automobiles was set at 100,000, then raised to 200,000, but a mere 24,000 automobiles were built. 13.5 billion kWh of electricity was produced in 1932 (instead of the 22 billion kWh planned), and the figure for mineral fertilizers was 0.9 million tons instead of 8 million tons planned. The targets were reached only for general and agricultural machine building, because they were expressed by value indices.

But does the failure to reach the key targets mean that the optimum and even the initial targets were unrealistic? No, if one examines the development of production in each of the five years, one can safely state that it was quite possible to reach basic industrial volume indices that would be in line with the optimum

figures or at least somewhere between the optimum and the initial ones (it is, however, more difficult to judge about industry's qualitative indicators and other targets). Even a very general analysis shows that the fulfilment of the first five-year plan was disrupted at an early stage by strong-arms measures intended to exceed the already critical "optimum" figures. The calls to fulfil the five-year targets in four and even in three years and the attempts to speed up development at the beginning and in the middle of the five-year period led to disproportions and instability, with the result that at the end of the first five-year period and at the beginning of the second growth rates were considerably lower than planned. The overall result of the nation's industrial development in the prewar period was clearly less than what it could have been if development had been steady and well-balanced. Undoubtedly, this result was due to the leap-with-a-slump act: the slump undid the leap, placing development far below the acceptable mean.

The initial targets envisaged high but gradually decreasing annual industrial growth rates—from 21.4 per cent in the first year to 17.4 per cent in the fifth. This was in accordance with the objective trends of growth that existed during those years. The optimum plan envisioned an annual industrial growth which would climb from 21.4 to 25.2 per cent in the five years. But every year starting with the second growth targets were unreasonably increased, which, instead of leading to real acceleration, led to disorganized production. Instead of the planned 31.3 per cent, industrial output increased by 22 per cent in 1930. In the third year, it grew 20.5 per cent instead of 24 per cent. The target for the fourth year was 36 per cent, but the actual growth, 14.7 per cent. The national economy slid into an uncontrollable slump that, in 1933, pulled the annual growth rate down to 5.5 per cent—an appalling figure in those years. Stalin, however, had already declared the five-year plan

fulfilled and, therefore, the fifth year's results were not included and did not spoil the impressive overall statistics.

It is well known how such failures are brought about. The opportunity to push up growth rates at will is restricted by the amount of resources available. If you have enough materials to build one factory but start building two, you obviously won't be able to build either of them. This is what happened to the iron-and-steel industry. When the pig-iron target was raised from 10 million to 17 million tons, the industry cracked. In 1931, when the greatest growth had been expected, the production of iron and steel actually decreased. This was followed by a period of slow growth, from 5 million tons in 1930 to just 7.1 million tons in 1933. In 1934, there was a jump to 10.4 million tons, after the efforts to rush development had ceased and the industry was not urged to make such leaps. This resulted from the prerequisites created several years before when many new industrial projects had been started at once. The production of 10 million tons of iron in the sixth year after the beginning of the first five-year period is close to the initial plan, but the optimum plan could probably have been fulfilled also had it not been for the rush.

In his speech, **"On Industrial Managers' Tasks,"** Stalin advanced a slogan to fulfil the first five-year plan within three years. He maintained and tried to substantiate his allegation that industrial output could be increased by 45 per cent in 1931. He asked, *"Do we have all the opportunities needed to reach the targets for 1931?"* And he answered, *"Yes, we have those opportunities."* He then specified those opportunities item by item, in his usual manner: natural resources; a government *"that has the desire and the power to use that huge natural wealth for the benefit of the people"*; support of *that government by the worker and peasant masses; a social system free from capitalism's incurable diseases; a*

*strong and united party. "Comrades," Stalin concluded, "these are all the objective factors that make it easier for us to reach the targets for 1931 and help us fulfil the five-year plan within four years and in the crucial industries, even within three years."*

All those factors certainly did exist and there was nothing wrong with enumerating them to substantiate, for instance, the general possibility of industrialization. In this case, however, specific economic targets were discussed, and it was impossible to explain why the existence of the Soviet government and the Bolshevik Party, which enjoyed popular support, should set the specific task of raising the industrial output in 1931 by exactly 45 per cent and not by 44 or 46, 10 or 100 per cent. Generally speaking, all the factors enumerated by Stalin are essential for socialist construction, but these factors are not "all," as he put it, that is needed to handle specific economic tasks. The nation also needed such trifles as nails and lumber, bricks and iron, cement and glass, and other materials in certain amounts and of a certain quality, within a certain time-frame and for certain prices—all those factors had to be taken into account if realistic targets were to be established. Stalin ignored those technicalities.

The technicalities could not be so easily ignored by experts. In February 1931, industrial managers applauded Stalin; in April, the Supreme Council of the National Economy distributed cement and lumber for the year among the country's major industrial associations (the Steel Association, the Coal Association, the Oil Association, the Machine-Building Association, the Agricultural Machines Association, etc). The luckiest received 84.4 per cent of the cement and 71.7 per cent of the lumber it required. The Agricultural Machines Association got just over half of the cement and less than half of the lumber required; the textile industry was granted 31 per cent of the cement and 23.6 per cent of the lumber needed.

Obviously, the fulfilment of the second half of the first five-year plan was disrupted because the material aspects of planning were ignored. The targets were tough, and no reserves existed, so any failure in any one sector caused a chain reaction, and emerging disproportions gave rise to new ones. Some time later, Orjonikidze\* spoke about drawbacks in the management of the steel industry during those years. Magnesite was brought to plants in the south from the Urals, although it was available in the Ukraine. Fire bricks were imported, even though the USSR had fireclay of its own. Such losses are unavoidable when growth is sought at any cost.

All this affected qualitative indices, first of all production costs, and consequently, accumulation. Accumulation was crucial to the entire plan, because the stake on internal accumulations was a cornerstone of the industrialization programme. The number of people employed annually in the national economy doubled in the first four years of the first five-year period, reaching 22.9 million in 1932 (the plan envisaged 15.8 million people for that year). The abundance of labour made it possible to lessen disproportions and to patch many holes in the economy, but the excess millions of employees were a disproportion that could cripple the entire economy. And it did.

During the years when the nation worked to fulfil the first five-year plan, productivity in industry grew 41 per cent, instead of the 110 per cent hoped for, while the average wage doubled (it had been planned to increase it by less than 50 per cent). Because the nation's work force doubled, the total pay increased fourfold, but the plan had not accounted for that. The production of consumer goods grew more slowly than was planned.

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\* Grigori (Sergo) Orjonikidze (1886-1937) joined the Party in 1903.

Another major proportion whose development became uncontrollable was the correlation between the amount of money existing in the country and the amount of goods available. Predictably, this led to a rapid growth of retail prices, which replaced the policy of low prices pursued until 1928. But the plan (and Stalin) promised that living standards would improve. So managerial agencies used the plan to slow the growth of prices. Their growth, therefore, was slower than was needed to maintain a balance in the market. This did away with the main achievement of the New Economic Policy, the convertible rouble (the rouble has not re-established its prestige to this day). The supply of goods slumped far below the demand. In 1928, when the first five-year plan was launched, consumer goods began to be rationed, and the rationing was not abolished until two years after the plan was completed. This was the only occasion in Soviet history when consumer goods were rationed throughout the country in peacetime. Rationing concerned primarily food (and some other consumer goods), and this brings us to the issue of agricultural development under the first five-year plan.

Statistics describing gross crop production and the yields of major crops in the early 1930s were not included in yearbooks for more than 50 years and first appeared in the yearbook *The National Economy of the USSR* published in 1987. The figures are too bad to mention. Throughout that period, it was claimed that the forced collectivization of agriculture (Stalin's plan instead of what Lenin had proposed) was needed to overcome the food problem. Here is how the problem was overcome. The gross grain yield totalled 69.9 million tons in 1932, instead of 105.8 million tons which was the target (compare that with 73.3 million tons produced in 1928). In the four years between 1928 and 1932, the output of sugar beet went down from 10.1 million tons to 6.6 million tons. The number of horses in



the country decreased from 32.1 million to 21.7 million, instead of growing in accordance with the plan. Cattle slumped from 60.1 million to 38.3 million (the final target in the five-year plan was 80.9 million). The number of pigs and sheep decreased more than 50 per cent. The output of milk, meat, wool, and eggs also slumped (decreasing by one third to one half).

It should be noted that agricultural development was considered a major priority only when the five-year plan was worked out. Later, the emphasis was shifted to agricultural collectivization as an end in itself. The plan was to organize some 20 per cent of peasant farms into agricultural cooperatives in five years. The target was exceeded in the very first year, and by the fifth year the collectivization was basically completed in the major agricultural areas. This *haste* caused peculiar effects in agriculture. The figure that was being *pushed up*, the percentage of farms collectivized, did grow quite rapidly. Yet, agricultural production, allegedly what collectivization was supposed to boost, went down. The end failed to justify the horrible means.

Why did this happen? Was it all unexpected and theoretically unpredictable? And if the damage that the haste caused was foreseen, who pushed the nation into that trap and why? Let us read some documents.

At its 12th Congress in April 1923 (the first Congress that Lenin did not attend but whose work he closely followed), the Party adopted a **Resolution on the Central Committee's Report**, saying the following. "*As even closer connection between the urban population and the peasantry, which comprises the huge majority of Russia's population, all-round assistance to the countryside from front-rank workers guided by our Party, large-scale organization of patronage assistance, etc., a careful course in taxation taking into account the peasants' actual ability to pay—all these are fundamental practical issues the Party is to handle in the coming few years. This is closely*

*connected with the Party's most important **political** task, essential to the whole outcome of the revolution—the task of **protecting and promoting with the utmost attention and thoroughness the alliance between the working class and the peasantry.** This should determine the Party's approach to the handling of all major problems on the agenda, with due regard to the fact that the share of state-owned industry in the entire national economy can grow but gradually, provided the Party should work steadily and systematically to improve industrial management, to enhance its profitability, and so on."*

A "careful course" with regard to the peasantry and industries that can grow "*but gradually*"—this wording is characteristic and significant.

The Congress also adopted a **Resolution on Agricultural Taxation**, intended to further the New Economic Policy by replacing the tax in kind with a money tax, which "*makes life easier for the peasantry and gives advantages to peasant farms not only through a reduction of taxes but also by making it possible for peasants to freely adjust themselves to the market...*"

At its 13th Congress in May 1924, the Party reiterated the decisions adopted by the 13th Party Conference, rejecting the Trotskyite criticism of the economic policy developed at the 10th, 11th, and 12th Congresses. The 14th Party Conference in April 1925 outlined a major turn towards the consolidation of the fundamental principles of the New Economic Policy, primarily in its relations with the peasantry. The Conference called for the eradication of the vestiges of war communism in taxation and administration. The task was set to consolidate the alliance between the workers and the peasants and the proletarian dictatorship "*on the basis of new relations and using new methods stemming from these emerging new relations.*"

The Conference proposed using extra resources to grant credits and render assistance to the peasant

masses, adopted a decision making it easier to hire farmhands and to lease land on a short-term basis (in order to utilize redundant manpower), and granted the right to participate in agricultural cooperation to "*all the sectors of the population engaged in agriculture.*" This meant that kulaks were to be admitted as voting members into cooperatives. It was proposed at the same time, however, that the rules of agricultural cooperatives include provisions banning "obviously kulak elements" from their boards. The Conference insisted that cooperatives' boards should be formed in free elections and warned local governments and Party organizations against strong-arm interference into the work of cooperatives.

Several months later, the economic policy reiterated by the 14th Party Conference came under attack from the "New Opposition" at the 14th Party Congress. That was the time when the nation was completing its post-war restoration of the economy, so apart from responding to that criticism, the Congress also was to charter the course for the industrialization and the socialist restructuring of the entire economy. What methods were to be used in that work?

In its main resolution, the 14th Party Congress pointed out, "*We witness **an economic offensive** of the proletariat on the basis of the New Economic Policy.*" This statement is important: the word "offensive" meant that the economic innovations then introduced in rural areas were part of the principles of standing policy, and not forced and unavoidable concessions to be abolished as soon as possible.

The Congress set the task "*... to follow the course at industrialization, the development of capital goods industries, and the formation of reserves for economic manoeuvring... to develop our socialist industry on the basis of a rising technological level, but in strict accordance with both the market capacity and the financial capabilities of*

*the State....*" This resolution is known in history as the Party's first document that put industrialization on the agenda as an immediate task. It should be emphasized that it was the 14th Party Congress, and not the 15th or the 16th Congress, which outlined the turn from restoration to industrialization; so if the very logic of that turn had called for a change from well-balanced development to hasty acceleration, a relevant change of approach should have also been announced at the 14th Congress. But there was nothing of the kind. The above quotation, brief as it is, clearly formulates a well-balanced and steady course, ensuring the supplying of materials. In fact, it contains a warning against establishing tough or utterly unreasonable targets.

In connection with the Party's work in rural areas, the Congress criticized two deviations—on the one hand, the underestimation of the struggle against the kulaks, and on the other, the excessive emphasis on that struggle, which overshadowed *"the key issue of communist policy in the countryside, the struggle for the middle peasant as the key figure in farming and the issue of cooperation as the principal organizational form of the peasants' advancement towards socialism."*

*"The Congress especially emphasizes the need to combat this latter deviation. With the Party's relatively better preparedness for direct struggle against the kulaks and the elimination of the first deviation, it is a much more difficult task to eliminate the second deviation, for its elimination calls for more complex tactics of struggle combining the methods of political isolation of the kulaks and those involving the majority of the peasantry in socialist construction. This is all the more so since the second deviation threatens today to revive the policy of the dispossession of kulaks and to disrupt the Party's current policy in the countryside, the course that has already ensured major political successes, to destroy the link between the proletariat and the peasantry, and, consequently, to wreck all our constructive work."*

That's what the Congress said!

The 14th Congress also approved the 14th Conference's decisions concerning the peasantry, indicating that *"only this turn in the Party policy, following from the changed relations among classes, has brought about a substantial improvement of the situation in the countryside..."* The situation really had to be improved: there had been peasant revolts just before the Conference, and they were mentioned by several speakers at the Congress, including Stalin, who delivered the main report.

At its 15th Conference in late 1926, the Party adopted a **Resolution on the Country's Economic Situation and the Party's Tasks**. Part One of that resolution is devoted to the **"Period of Economic Restructuring on a New Technological Basis and the Rate of Industrialization."** It reads:

*"The Conference strongly condemns the opposition's views that industrialization should be carried out through such agricultural taxation and pricing as to suspend inevitably the development of agriculture, to reduce the sources of raw materials for industry, and to narrow the market for industrial output, which would inevitably cause a sharp slowdown in the rate of the industrialization."*

Many quotes from other documents can be found to support the fact that the economic policy which Lenin had started pursuing at the 10th Congress, a policy rejecting all leaps and *"hysterical impulses"* and advocating *"the steady advance of the iron battalions of the proletariat,"* remained unchanged for several years. But the most **important** document among those, a document which incorporated the theoretical achievements and the practical economic experience of the first decade of Soviet government, was the **15th Party Congress's Directives Concerning the Development of the First Five-Year Plan**. Adopted in December 1927, the Directives exemplify to this day a comprehensive study of the

problem of efficiency in production. In just a few pages, the document examines the correlation between consumption and accumulation, industry and agriculture, the capital goods industries and the consumer goods industries—all the principal economic sectors. None of the directives upset the overall balance or highlighted any one sector to the detriment of another.

The document is difficult to quote because it should be taken as a whole and not examined by sections. Here is just one example, to characterize the general approach to problems, *"In considering the rate of development, it is likewise necessary to bear in mind that the task is extremely difficult. We should proceed not from the need to ensure the maximum rate of accumulation in the next year or the next few years, but from a correlation of elements of the national economy to ensure the highest rate of development possible on a long-term basis."*

For a long, long time afterwards, the temptation to make a leap, to resolve all problems at one stroke remained widespread and irresistible. It is peculiar how dreams about miraculous leaps have tended to produce similar ideas about the duration of those leaps! Stalin insisted that the five-year plan should be fulfilled in three years, Khrushchev\* dreamed about overtaking the United States in livestock breeding in two or three years, and Mao also planned to complete the first Big Leap in three years. It is remarkable how plainly the Party formulated the task, to **"ensure the highest rate of development possible on a long-term basis,"** only a few months before the first attempt to make a leap in the history of socialist construction. This defeats the claim that no one knew in advance that leaps could be disastrous. Many were aware and even vowed not to attempt leaps. It means that **Stalin deliberately ignored**

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\* Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) joined the Communist Party in 1918.

this knowledge (we say Stalin since he alone had the power to do so).

Could it be that earlier Stalin had pressed for hasty acceleration but was unable to put his ideas into effect because of opposition? Here are a few quotations from Stalin himself:

In an article titled **"The Party Before and After Taking Power"** (1921), Stalin wrote the following concerning economic construction: *"This process will undoubtedly be slow and painful, but it is inevitable, unavoidable, and what is inevitable does not cease to be inevitable because some impatient comrades get nervous and demand quick results and spectacular operations."*

In **"The Foundations of Leninsm"** in 1924, Stalin pointed out, *"It scarcely needs proof that there is not the slightest possibility of carrying out these tasks in a short period, of accomplishing all this in a few years."* (This refers to the major priorities of socialist construction. Doesn't this bring to mind the famous statement made at the time when the nation worked to fulfil the first five-year plan: either we'll run this distance in a few years or we'll be crushed.)

In his report **"Results of Work of XIV Conference of the R.C.P.(B)"** in 1925, Stalin noted that *"Proceeding from the fact that differentiation is going on in the countryside, some comrades draw the conclusion that the Party's main task is to foment class struggle there. That is wrong. That is idle talk. That is not our main task now. That is a rehash of the old Menshevik songs taken from the old Menshevik encyclopedia. To foment class struggle in the countryside is not by any means the main task at present. The main task at present is to rally the middle peasants around the proletariat, to win them over to our side again. The main task at present is to link up with the main masses of the peasantry, to raise their material and cultural level, and to move forward together with those main masses along the road to socialism."*

And: *"But how is peasant economy to be included in the system of economic construction? Through the cooperatives. Through the credit co-operatives, agricultural co-operatives, consumers' co-operatives and producers' cooperatives. Such are the roads and paths by which peasant economy must be slowly but thoroughly drawn into the general system of socialist construction."*

So: *"slowly but thoroughly"!* And then:

*"The Communists in the countryside must refrain from improper forms of administration. We must not rely merely on giving orders to the peasants. We must learn to explain to the peasants patiently the questions they do not understand, we must learn to convince the peasants, sparing neither time nor effort for this purpose."*

In his concluding remarks at the 14th Party Congress, Stalin made it plain that the alliance with the middle peasants against the kulaks should not be interpreted as war against the kulaks. Stalin said the following about what Larin\* wrote on the alliance with the middle peasants, *"It is true that in his book he makes this reservation and says that neutralization is not enough for us, that we must take 'a step farther' in the direction of 'agreement with the middle peasants against the kulaks.' But here, unfortunately, Comrade Larin drags in his scheme of 'a second revolution' against kulak domination, with which we disagree, which brings him near to Zinoviev and compels me to dissociate myself from him to some extent."*

Just three to four years later, it would have been very appropriate to recall how Stalin had dissociated himself from *"a second revolution"*—and he did that addressing a Party Congress, which supported him against the opposition.

The year 1925 provided ample evidence that the new

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\* Larin (Mikhail Lurie) (1882-1932) joined the Social-Democratic movement in 1900.



policy with regard to the peasantry had been developed by the pro-Stalin majority of the Party's Central Committee (or, more specifically, by a body known as the Molotov Commission) as a long-term course and not as a short-term tactic. In June 1925, Stalin answered questions from an audience at the University of Sverdlovsk. One question was quite straightforward, *"How can a struggle be waged against the kulaks without fomenting class struggle?"* In his answer, Stalin clearly demonstrated that class contradictions could and should be resolved without fomenting class struggle. In regard to combating the high prices fixed by the kulaks, he said, *"...it is not in our interest to foment class struggle... we are quite able to avoid, and must avoid, fomenting class struggle and the complications resulting from it."* But how? The answer is very convincing: *"We can and must hold at the disposal of the state sufficiently large food stocks to be able to bring pressure to bear on the food market; to intervene, when necessary, to maintain prices at a level acceptable to the masses of the working people, and in this way to frustrate the profiteering machinations of the kulaks."* Stalin then went on to report certain successes of that policy: food prices had been kept low, and the kulaks had been forced to give up and sell grain for reasonable prices in a number of regions.

A quotation from Stalin's **report to the 14th Party Congress**, *"We must issue the slogan for the poor peasants that they must, at last, stand on their own feet, that they must, with the aid of the Communist Party and with the aid of the state, organize themselves into groups; that in the arena of the Soviets, in the arena of the cooperatives, in the arena of the Peasant Committees, in all the arenas of rural public life, they must learn to fight the kulaks, to fight, however, not by appealing to the GPU, but by a political struggle, by an organized struggle. Only in that way can the poor peasants become steeled, only in*

*that way can the poor peasants be organized, only in that way can the poor peasants be transformed from a dependent group into a bulwark of the proletariat in the countryside."*

Phrases about industrial development found in the same report clearly indicate who formulated the relevant provisions in the Congress's resolution, *"We could double the assignments for the expansion of industry; but that would mean a rapid rate of industrial development which we would not be able to maintain owing to the great shortage of free capital, and it would certainly lead to a breakdown..."* And then: *"...the further development of our industry will, in all probability, proceed at a less rapid tempo than it has done up to now."* Stalin insisted that *"...in building, we must have reserves; we must have reserves with which to correct our blunders... we need to accept the idea that we must accumulate reserves."* Okay, let us accept the idea.

1926 was the first year of industrialization, the first year when the country's industry developed in a new environment, essentially different from what had existed in the restoration period. Did Stalin's position change in that new environment? Not at all. A quotation from his report **"Economic Situation and the Policy of the Party"**, *"The same must be said of our rate of accumulation, of the reserves available for the development of our industry. Among us there is sometimes a fondness for drawing up fantastic industrial plans, without taking our actual resources into account. People sometimes forget that you can build neither industrial plans nor any broad and all-embracing enterprises without a certain minimum of reserves. They forget this and run too far ahead."* And also this, *"An army command which gets out of touch with its army and loses contact with it is not a command. Similarly, industry that gets out of touch with the national economy as a whole and loses contact with it, cannot be the leading element in the national economy."*

In his **report at the 15th Party Conference** in November 1926, Stalin said that the opposition bloc *"tends to take... the path of 'superhuman' leaps and 'heroic' incursions into the objective course of events. Hence... the demand that our country should be industrialized in a mere six months, and so on. Hence the adventurist policy of the opposition bloc. Of particular importance in this connection is the opposition bloc's theory (it is also the theory of Trotskyism) of skipping over the peasantry here, in our country, in the matter of industrializing our country..."*

The report contains another idea, which was also repeatedly reiterated in other speeches: *"Trotsky, apparently, does not accept the thesis that in our country industrialization can develop only through the gradual improvement of the living standards of the labouring masses in the countryside... Hence the practical proposals of the opposition bloc—that wholesale prices should be raised, that the peasantry should be more heavily taxed, etc.,—proposals which, instead of strengthening the economic cooperation between the proletariat and the peasantry, would disrupt it..."*

When he met with foreign worker delegations on November 5, 1927, Stalin was asked, *"How do you intend to achieve collectivism in the peasant question?"* His answer was, *"We intend to achieve collectivism in agriculture gradually, by economic, financial, and educational and political measures..."*

After that Stalin explained that rural areas were receiving 70 to 100 per cent of their industrial products from cooperatives and state trading agencies and sold more than 80 per cent of their grain and almost all of their raw materials for industry to cooperative and state purchasing agencies. Thus, state planning had already been introduced in agriculture. The volume of the production, the prices, and the quality of cotton, sugar beet, etc. were determined by contracts concluded with

state corporations and not by free market fluctuations. Stalin concluded, *"...it can confidently be said that all branches of agriculture, not excluding grain production, will gradually take this path of development. And that is the direct path to the collectivization of agriculture."* As regards *"all-embracing collectivization,"* *"we are moving towards this goal, but have not yet reached it and are not likely to reach it soon. Why? Because, among other things, it requires large sums of money, which our state does not yet possess, but which will undoubtedly be accumulated in the course of time."*

At that time, Stalin was just as careful about industrialization. His position, as outlined in the report at the 15th Party Congress in December 1927, is nearly faultless. Stalin first cited the figures describing the growth of the output of nationalized large-scale industrial facilities in each of the previous three years (42.2, 18.2, and 15.8 per cent). He then cited the preliminary targets developed by the State Planning Committee: large-scale industrial facilities were to increase their output by an average of 15 per cent a year; the preliminary target for industry in general was 12 per cent annually. Then he compared these figures with the growth rates of the United States (from 2.6 to 8.2 per cent) and with Russia's best figures before the revolution (10.7 per cent). He concluded as follows: **"The percentage of annual increase in the output of our socialist industry, and also in the output of all industry, is a record one, such as not a single big capitalist country in the world can show."**

The Congress's Resolution on Stalin's report does not say a word about increasing growth rates; it only says that industrialization should be "pursued at a steady rate" and emphasizes the problem of accumulating commodity and hard-currency reserves. The Congress adopted guidelines stressing that "industry's central problem," to which all other priorities should be subordinated, was cutting production costs—

gross output targets were of secondary importance. We have already quoted the Congress's guideline that, far from insisting on increasing industrial growth, it nearly warned against rapid increases of growth rates.

As he set the tasks for the Party's work in rural areas, Stalin spoke along much the same lines as in the above-quoted conversation with foreign workers. Here is one significant detail: *"Those comrades are wrong who think that it is possible and necessary to put an end to the kulaks by means of administrative measures, through the GPU: give an order, affix a seal, and that settles it. That is an easy way, but it is far from being effective. The kulak must be defeated by means of economic measures and in conformity with Soviet law."* This was said in December 1927.

That was an eventful Congress, its delegates were wise and optimistic. The Congress summed up the first successes of socialist construction and planned further progress with confidence. It rid itself of the opposition bloc whose members in various combinations had plagued the Party for more than four years, since Trotsky's notorious speech in 1923. Everyone was sick and tired of the clashes with the opposition, everyone wanted to live in peace and work hard to build a new life. Congress delegates were, therefore, relieved to vote the opposition out of the Party. They gave an ovation to the following passage in Stalin's closing remarks:

*"If you study the history of our Party, you will find that always, at certain serious turns taken by our Party, a certain section of the old leaders fell out of the cart of the Bolshevik Party and made room for new people. A turn is a serious thing, comrades. A turn is dangerous for those who do not sit firmly in the Party cart. Not everybody can keep his balance when a turn is made. You turn the cart—and on looking round you find that somebody has fallen out. (Applause.) Let us take 1903, the period of the Second Congress of our Party. That was the period of the*



In his last works, in the *Letter to the Congress* in particular, Lenin wrote about Trotsky, Stalin, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin, and Pyatakov.

Just four years later, Trotsky lived in exile and Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Pyatakov were expelled from the Party; after another two years, Trotsky was expelled from the USSR and Bukharin was deprived of any significant authority. None of the senior leaders was in Stalin's way any more. Stalin became the only ruler.

In the photo (left to right): Joseph Stalin, Alexei Rykov, Lev Kamenev, and Grigori Zinoviev (the early 1920s).



Eagerly voting to expel the opposition, mainly old Bolsheviks, from the Party at the 15th Party Congress in 1927, the delegates had no way of knowing that many of them would face "an illegal death" only a decade later.

*Party's turn from agreement with the liberals to a mortal struggle against the liberal bourgeoisie, from preparing for the struggle against tsarism to open struggle against it for completely routing tsarism and feudalism. At that time the Party was headed by the six: Plekhanov, Zaslulich, Martov, Lenin, Axelrod and Potresov. The turn proved fatal to five out of six. They fell out of the cart. Lenin alone remained. (Applause.) It turned out that the old leaders of the Party, the founders of the Party (Plekhanov, Zaslulich and Axelrod) plus two young ones (Martov and Potresov) were against one, also a young one, Lenin... It is now clear to every Bolshevik that if Lenin had not waged a resolute struggle against the five, if the five had not been pushed aside, our Party could not have rallied as a Bolshevik Party capable of leading the proletarians to the revolution against the bourgeoisie."* **(Voices: "That is true.")** After mentioning a few other turns and several other people who "had fallen out of the cart," Stalin concluded, "...The same must be said about the present period of our revolution. We are in the period of a turn from the restoration of industry and agriculture to the reconstruction of the entire national economy, to its reconstruction on a new technical basis, when the building of socialism is no longer merely in prospect, but a living, practical matter, which calls for the surmounting of extremely great difficulties of an internal and external character. You know that this turn has proved fatal to the leaders of our opposition, who were scared by the new difficulties and intended to turn the Party in the direction of surrender. And if certain leaders, who do not want to sit firmly in the cart, now fall out, it is nothing to be surprised at. It will merely rid the Party of people who are getting in its way and hindering its progress. Evidently, they seriously want to free themselves from our Party cart. Well, if some of the old leaders who are turning into trash intend to fall out of the cart—a good riddance to them." **(Prolonged stormy applause. The audience gives a standing ovation to Comrade Stalin.)**



The speaker did not highlight one interesting similarity: just as in 1903, there were six persons "in the cart" in 1923, after Lenin resigned from active work. Just like in 1903, there were three senior leaders (Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev) and three younger ones (Stalin, Bukharin, and Pyatakov). The coincidence was certainly accidental, but was it merely by chance that Stalin led the audience to it? Stalin's story surely looks far-fetched, with so many various events of a quarter of a century of the Party's history and so many various persons all acting as elements of the "Party cart theory," which showed how natural it was that many leaders should be discarded and only one should remain. And the connection between the lengthy struggle against the opposition, which had begun in 1923, and the turn made in 1927 looks quite awkward. Also, the speaker did not emphasize the difference between 1927 and 1903; the 15th Congress was discarding four leaders instead of five, leaving two young ones—Stalin and Bukharin. Well, nobody said the turn of 1927 was the last one.

Once again: that turn occurred in December 1927.

Very soon, on January 15, 1928, Stalin went on a Siberian tour, visiting Novosibirsk, Barnaul, Omsk, and Rubtsovsk where he held meetings with Party activists. Those meetings were held less than one month after the 15th Congress, where Stalin had strongly condemned the Trotskyists' "*leftism*" and advocated the Party's strategy and Lenin's plan of transition to socialism in a most eloquent and unbending manner, just as he had a year, two years and four years earlier. Stalin, however, would never say anything like that again. What he said at those meetings in Siberia, which immediately followed the 15th Congress, and on all later occasions was something absolutely different. Those statements were not exactly public, since they were published 21 years later, to be exact, their summaries.

His speeches concerned a narrow, specific subject—grain procurements. But the approach was very general, as befits a national leader. First, the most topical subject: grain procurement targets were not being reached and pressure had to be applied. In what way? With the aid of courts and the procurator's office, which were to use the article of the Criminal Code concerning profiteering. Obviously, Stalin maintained, the grain procurement targets were not being reached because the kulaks wanted to sell grain at high prices.

It was a clever move to begin a turn of "*the cart*" with a strike against the kulaks. That was a dangerous moment, since the "*Party cart theory*" provided no indication whose turn it was to fall out when the cart turned again. Therefore, one had to be careful at the beginning. The Communists had no reason to be fond of the exploiter classes, so it shouldn't be too difficult to bend the Party strategy just a little and insert a provision for a strike against the kulaks. Still, the General Secretary did meet with some objections from local Party workers. They were probably senior members of the Party and had absorbed the old doctrines or, more importantly, maybe they had read too diligently what Stalin had said just a month or two earlier. He had to explain things to them, "*You say that enforcement of article 107 against the kulaks would be an emergency measure, that it would not be productive of good results, that it would worsen the situation in the countryside. Comrade Zagumenny is especially insistent about this. Supposing it would be an emergency measure—what of it? Why is it that in other territories and regions enforcement of Article 107 has yielded splendid results, has rallied the labouring peasantry around the Soviet Government and improved the situation in the countryside, while among you, in Siberia, it is held that it is bound to produce bad results and worsen the situation? Why, on what grounds? You say that your prosecuting and judicial authorities are*

*not prepared for such a step. But why is it that in other territories and regions..."*

Well, that should be sufficient. "*Why is it that in other territories..."*" seems to be the only argument in favour of the proposed deviation from the Party's strategy.

But one can hardly believe that the General Secretary went on a three-week tour so soon after the 15th Congress just to improve the fulfilment of the grain procurement plan in Siberia. He only used the issue of grain procurements to ensure a more radical "*turn of the cart*" of Party policy. So he went on, "*But there is no guarantee that the kulaks will not again sabotage the grain procurements next year. More, it may be said with certainty that so long as there are kulaks, so long will there be sabotage of the grain procurements. In order to put the grain procurements on a more or less satisfactory basis, other measures are required. What measures exactly? I have in mind developing the formation of collective farms and state farms.*"

According to Stalin, the need to establish collective farms and state farms stemmed from the immediate task of ensuring grain procurements, rather than being an essential component of the socialist transformation of agriculture. A most substantial social change, which, according to Lenin, could be achieved "*at best ... in one or two decades,*" was turned, by Stalin, into a lightning operation that could be carried out by administrative means, just like grain procurement campaigns. No opposition groups had been able to propose this, but Stalin could not afford to concern himself with a theoretical substantiation. The need to speed up the collectivization of agriculture had to be substantiated with some urgent need—otherwise it would be impossible for Stalin to disregard and make others disregard his own recent words about caution and harmful haste and about all-embracing collectivization being a

goal that "we are unlikely to reach soon." And those words just had to be disregarded. For, in spite of all that had been said and written, Stalin now thought it possible to set a time-frame for that major social transformation—and in very clear and accurate terms, too. He said, *"We must therefore see to it that in the course of the next three or four years the collective farms and state farms, as deliverers of grain, are in a position to supply the state with at least one third of the grain required."*

But the "turn of the cart" did not end there. The intimidating proposition involving the prosecuting authorities and the Criminal Code did not concern only the kulaks. It was not the kulaks that the Party workers in Siberia were concerned about when they argued with the General Secretary. The kulaks were a good pretext, from which Stalin moved on, *"...all areas of our country, without exception, must be covered with collective farms (and state farms) capable of replacing not only the kulaks, but the individual peasants as well, as suppliers of grain to the state."*

This sounds correct, and even familiar! Indeed, collective farms are certainly necessary! The new element was that the establishment of collective farms was linked with an urgent, immediate priority—grain procurements. The new element was that the General Secretary, who had boasted quite recently that an excellent link existed between state industry and the peasantry (that is various cooperatives and state trading and purchasing agencies operating on contracts), was now saying that the Soviet system could not stand on two different foundations—socialist industry and non-socialized agriculture.

It was not by chance that Stalin kept this speech from public attention for 21 years. Years later, in 1949, he had no one to fear, but in 1928, the publication of this thesis would have caused a scandal—it came less

than one month after the 15th Congress, which expelled several opposition leaders for proposing exactly the same thing.

The year 1949 also saw the first publication of the letter entitled **"First Results of the Procurement Campaign and the Next Tasks of the Party."** At the end of the letter, dispatched to all the Party organizations in February 1928, was written: *"on the instruction of the C.C. C.P.S.U.(B) J. Stalin."* Stalin wrote the letter immediately after his Siberian tour, outlining the ideas that had been tested in the course of the meetings in Siberia. It is important because the letter was the first document, although a classified one, that formulated those ideas. It could not *"skirt"* certain inevitable questions. One of them was: and how about the food reserves that were supposed to defeat the kulaks? Stalin was forced to make the following graceful admission: *"But as we know, the state did not possess such reserves."* In his letter, Stalin also wrote, *"The talk to the effect that we are abolishing NEP, that we are introducing the surplus-appropriation system, dekulakization, etc., is counter-revolutionary chatter that must be vigorously combated."* Just a little warning to potential rebels.

And of course, there were strong warnings against excesses. The Criminal Code was to be used, but there were to be no unlawful arrests. Self-taxation was to be enhanced, but without surplus-appropriation. And no leftist direct commodity exchanges, except that *"with regard to goods in very short supply the privileges enjoyed by members of co-operatives may in exceptional cases be extended to peasant sellers of grain who are not members of co-operatives."* Isn't it all clear now?

Some time later, Stalin delivered a report entitled **"Work of April Joint Plenum of C.C. and C.C.C." (Central Control Commission).** Curiously, the report began with a large chapter on **"Self-Criticism"** (it comprised nearly one third of the entire report), although

there had been no such item on the plenary meeting's agenda. Stalin said that self-criticism was of vital importance, just like air or water. To clarify things, Stalin specified who should be criticized—the leaders. They should be criticized, he said, in a revolutionary manner, to keep them from losing touch with the masses. Stalin even reproached the masses for *"beginning to look up at the leaders from below with blinking eyes"* and for being *"not infrequently... afraid to criticize them."* He warned that the Party would be finished if its leaders exaggerated their worth, and he issued this call, *"We must make it possible for Soviet people to 'go for' their leaders.... We must listen attentively to all criticism coming from Soviet people,"* he added, *"even if sometimes it may not be correct to the full and in all details."* Many people just couldn't understand why so much was being said, after all the opposition groups had been routed, and why were they being told to *"go for"* their leaders?! But today, we know what the leader of China did when he wanted to eliminate his second-in-command: he issued the slogan: *"Strike the headquarters!"*

The report contained a new explanation of the use of Article 107 of the Criminal Code. In February 1928, Stalin wrote that the article was to be used only in the course of that particular year. In April 1928, the *"cart"* was turned a little more: *"...if there are no emergency circumstances in the next procurement year and the procurements proceed normally, Article 107 will not be applied. And, on the contrary, if emergency circumstances arise and the capitalist elements start their 'tricks' again, Article 107 will again appear on the scene."*

May 1928 saw the first strike on the real target of all the manoeuvring. In a talk entitled **"On the Grain Front,"** Stalin said there were *"some people"* (no names for the time being) who did not appreciate the significance of struggle against the kulaks. Statements to the

effect that the kulaks were no more dangerous than the wealthy entrepreneurs living in urban areas were declared to be "*sheer liberal chatter*" intended to lull people's vigilance... It was explained that the petty capitalists in the cities were opposed by large-scale industry, while the kulaks—only by the still-weak collective farms and state farms. Similar explanations had been made by the "*New Opposition*," but the General Secretary had reasonably objected at that time that state-run industry, transport, trading agencies, and banks were counterbalancing both the urban and the rural capitalists—quite successfully at that. Stalin then condemned Kamenev and Zinoviev as "*alarmists*" scared by the kulaks and "*defeatists*" who had no faith in the triumph of socialist economy. But in May 1928 Stalin said that to fail to appreciate the full strength of the kulaks was "*to lose one's senses, to break with Leninism, to desert to the side of the enemies of the working class.*" This very strong criticism was followed by very specific guidelines, "*The widespread movement at the beginning of this year for the formation of new collective farms and for the expansion of the old ones should considerably increase the grain output of the collective farms by the end of the year.*" So "*the widespread movement*" was on the agenda. Surely when it had been planned to demonstrate to peasants the advantages of collective farming in practice, no one expected any "*widespread movement*" or considerable results "*by the end of the year.*" But Article 107 helped bring on a "*widespread movement*" and speed up the whole process.

Having ensured support for his policy at the joint plenary meeting of the Party's Central Committee and Central Control Commission in April 1928, Stalin attempted to utilize that victory in order to make the decisions of previous Party Congresses appear less obligatory than their original intention. In June 1928, he

wrote a letter known as “**An Answer to Frumkin**” and circulated it to all the Politburo members (the letter was first published in 1949). Moisei Frumkin,\* who then worked in grain procurement, had made an attempt to remind the Party of the decisions adopted by the 14th and 15th Congresses. Stalin replied that, first of all, the 14th Congress was irrelevant and there was no point in going back to its decisions after so many years, because the situation had changed. As for the 15th Congress, it had indeed called for struggle against the kulaks. Stalin did not specify, however, how the Congress and himself had interpreted that struggle. Instead, he did his best to prove that the emergency measures were exactly in accordance with the 15th Congress’s decisions.

But in July 1928, Stalin ran into a problem. The “*turn of the cart*” met with some opposition at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee which was held that month. The plenary meeting lasted nine days, and Stalin delivered at least three long speeches there. The speeches clearly indicate that there were debates about the fundamental issues of the Party’s policy with regard to the peasantry. Stalin used one of his favourite tricks calculated for effect. If one compares his speeches at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee (published 21 years later) with what he told the Communist Party activists of Leningrad about the plenary meeting’s results on the following day (that report was published immediately), it is difficult to believe that the speeches and the report were delivered by the same person. At the plenary meeting of the Central Committee, Stalin went out of his way, using all kinds of tricky tactics to ensure his number-one priority, keeping grain prices unreasonably low. That was the fundamental issue of the Trotskyist strategy—to speed up industrialization by

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\* Moisei Frumkin (1878-1938) joined the Communist Party in 1898.



imposing a supertax on the peasantry. This justified all the other elements—emergency measures (they were the only way to take the grain from the peasants, since the purchase prices were so low), accelerated collectivization of agriculture (also intended to make grain procurement easier), and the dispossession of the kulaks. In his speech on July 9, 1928 (which was not immediately published), Stalin plainly said that the peasantry *"not only pays the state the usual taxes, direct and indirect; it also overpays in the relatively high prices for manufactured goods—that is in the first place, and it is more or less underpaid in the prices for agricultural produce—that is in the second place. This is an additional tax levied on the peasantry for the sake of promoting industry, which caters for the whole country, the peasantry included. It is something in the nature of a 'tribute,' of a supertax..."* This policy is obviously Trotskyist, in essence, form and even in its wording, and one can't help expecting the General Secretary to start criticizing it in extremely strong terms, the way he had on many earlier occasions. But Stalin just continued, *"...[a supertax], which we are compelled to levy for the time being in order to preserve and accelerate our present rate of industrial development..."* So *"we are compelled"* to levy the supertax. But why? Here are the arguments, *"...we should not be Bolsheviks if we slurred over it and closed our eyes to the fact that, unfortunately, our industry and our country cannot at present dispense with this additional tax on the peasantry."* This is quite a departure from Stalin's previous speeches, in which he had indignantly rejected this road to industrialization. Stalin went on to say that, first, it would be possible to gradually eliminate the additional tax within a period of several years, and second, it was to be eliminated by reducing the prices of manufactured goods and lowering the production costs of grain. In other words, raising the grain prices was not even mentioned as a future possibility. In his speech

delivered at the Central Committee two days later, Stalin said that even his opponents had dismissed as wrong "*a policy of replacement prices.*" ("Replacement prices" were prices covering production costs. The state's intention not to pay those prices for years obviously spelled disaster for all farmers—individual producers as well as members of agricultural cooperatives.) Two days after this, in a speech that was published immediately, Stalin was pleased to report the Central Committee's decision to effect "*a certain increase of grain prices,*" presenting what he had strongly opposed as his own accomplishment.

That was the third item of the decisions adopted by the plenary meeting of the Central Committee, as summarized by Stalin. The first two were the following: "*a) ...an immediate stop to the practice of house-to-house visitations, unlawful searches and all other infringements of revolutionary law; b) ...an immediate stop to any kind of reversion to the surplus-appropriation system and to all attempts whatsoever to close peasant markets...*" It is curious to read this list of methods used against the peasantry even before the policy of "*eliminating the kulaks as a class,*" especially since Stalin referred to the peasantry as a whole, not only the kulaks. The determination to do away with those measures is especially touching because we know how hard Stalin had worked in January 1928 to have them introduced and how thoroughly he had explained to the Central Committee four days before that those who believed the emergency measures could be eliminated in the future were utterly wrong. He even quoted Lenin to make his point, overlooking (or ignoring) the fact that the quotation from Lenin actually defeated his argument. Lenin wrote that emergency measures could not be ruled out for all time—they might have to be introduced, say, during a war. But then, of course, a war is a real emergency.

This time, however, Stalin found himself in an

awkward position: unintentionally and unexpectedly, his proposed policy received Trotsky's support. After the Party's Central Committee cancelled some of the emergency measures at its plenary meeting in July 1928, Trotsky, who was unaware of Stalin's attitude, wrote an open letter strongly criticizing the Central Committee's decision and advocating the policy of emergency measures. This support put Stalin in a very awkward position—in front of all those who had attended the Central Committee plenary meeting and quite a number of Party activists who knew about its work. Stalin's position became even more awkward after *Pravda* published Nikolai Bukharin's famous article "**Notes of an Economist.**"

At first sight, it seemed only natural that Bukharin, Stalin's right hand in the ideological routing of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc and the main target for attacks from the opposition, should publish another article with a detailed criticism of Trotskyite views. However, the further one reads, the stranger the tone of the article appears. The article was written several months after the Trotskyites had been expelled from the Party, at a time when they were being quietly arrested and exiled and when they had no influence whatsoever on the Party's policy. But Bukharin's criticism was strong and zealous, as though the danger was still present and the fight was continuing. Suddenly one realizes: that's right, the enemy was still there. The term "Trotskyites" was part of Bukharin's tactic, but his criticism was aimed against Stalin. The theses that Bukharin was criticizing had been presented in the previous few months by none other than Stalin. The same theses had been formulated before by the Trotskyites, and that was how Bukharin managed to disguise his real target, making a direct counter-attack difficult. Bukharin's criticism, however, appeared when the views he was criticizing were advocated by Stalin

and not by the Trotskyites. Here is one example. Beginning in 1928, in his speeches in January, then at the joint plenary meeting of the Party's Central Committee and the Central Control Commission in April 1928, and at the Central Committee plenary meeting in July, Stalin repeatedly maintained that the peasantry had grown rich after three consecutive years of good harvests and was in a position to conceal surplus grain. The conclusion was obvious: the industrialization programme was not receiving as much as it should and agriculture was getting more than it needed. It was, therefore, unjustifiable to increase the grain prices—on the contrary, the screws had to be tightened and a "tribute" had to be imposed on the peasantry to promote industrial development.

This sounded very revolutionary, especially because after saying that "*the countryside was developing and growing rich*" Stalin added that the kulaks were getting especially rich. Who would be opposed to dispossessing the exploiters to promote the development of socialist industry? These were, however, merely words, no matter how attractive they were. Bukharin criticized those words (or, rather, similar words pronounced by the Trotskyites) using facts and economic analysis. He cited figures to prove beyond doubt that, although the peasants' incomes were growing, grain production was badly weakened by excessive taxation in favour of industry. The figures cited by Bukharin showed that nearly half of the average peasant's income was earned by seasonal jobs in the cities and towns. This meant, first, that industrial development was further accelerated to the detriment of grain production, and, second, that the incomes of all peasants were growing, not just the kulaks, for kulaks had no need of seasonal jobs. The practical conclusions of this were obvious: there was no need to encourage peasants to seek seasonal jobs, not even in industry, for there was an overabundance of

manpower, while the weakening of grain production was truly dangerous, primarily for industrialization. With extra zeal and an indignation which was almost too far-fetched, Bukharin criticized Trotsky's letter against the decisions of the July 1928 plenary meeting of the Party's Central Committee that cancelled some of emergency measures against the peasants.

This exemplifies the difficulty of keeping one's balance while trying to push out another person, when "*the cart turned.*" Bukharin advocated no opposition platform contradicting the Party's strategy, nor did he criticize Stalin directly. On the contrary, he defended the Party's strategy, however, he did this so zealously that even the General Secretary found it difficult to stay on course.

It was too late to retreat. The only thing Stalin could do was to mount an offensive. In October 1928, he addressed a joint plenary meeting of the Moscow Committee and the Moscow Control Commission of the Party with a speech entitled "**The Right Danger in the C.P.S.U.(B.).**" The speech was published in *Pravda*. Stalin pointed out that there was a Right-wing deviation in the Party, a serious phenomenon not to be taken lightly, and specified that the Right-wingers opposed the struggle against the kulaks and favoured a slowdown of industrialization. He went on to say that, although the "Leftist" danger was *as bad as* the threat from the Right, it was necessary to focus attention on the Right, for, "*it is clear that the Party has learned a great deal in the years of the fight against the 'Left,' Trotskyite deviation, and cannot now be easily deceived by 'Left' phrases.*" (Remember the good old days of 1925-1927, when the Party, the General Secretary then said, was immune to Rightist dangers! Just a few months later the Party was again helpless against them.)

At its plenary meeting in November 1928, the Party's Central Committee discussed the targets for the

economic year 1928/1929, the first year of the first five-year plan. Stalin delivered a speech entitled **"The Country's Industrialization and the Right-Wing Deviation in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)."** At the beginning, Stalin enumerated the three items he would deal with: the rate of industrialization, agriculture, and the Right-wing deviation. In discussing the first item, the speaker dwelt on a great variety of subjects, including "industrialization programmes" carried out by Peter the Great, an article written by Lenin before the October Socialist Revolution, and the statement that if the Soviet Union had the industrial potential of Germany, it would have no need for a rapid industrialization. A subject that Stalin did not mention at all, although it was more than relevant, was the 15th Party Congress and its guidelines for the development of the first five-year plan. Which was quite understandable: Stalin's speech fully reversed the course established by the 15th Congress, highlighting the single priority of speeding up the development of heavy industry to the detriment of everything else. Neither was mention made of the Congress in connection with agriculture. When he spoke about the need to fight the Right-wing deviation, Stalin did mention the 15th Party Congress, with a good deal of irritation, *"...the Fifteenth Congress has simply been tacked on here without rhyme or reason..."* These words opened Stalin's rebuff to Moisei Frumkin, a member of the Party's Central Committee who had again written letters to the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, reminding them of the decisions of the 14th and 15th Congresses.

At the very beginning of 1929, Stalin spoke at a joint plenary meeting of the Politburo of the Party's Central Committee and the Central Control Commission Presidium. A summary of his speeches there was first published in 1949, under the title: *"Bukharin's Group*

*and the Right Deviation in Our Party.*" For the first time, Stalin mentioned his three opponents—Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsy. He mentioned the differences which had first emerged at the plenary meeting of the Party's Central Committee in July 1928—differences concerning the rate of industrialization and the means to deal with the grain problem. He described the article "**Notes of an Economist**" as an attempt to revise or "*correct*" the Central Committee's line. In later speeches that were much larger and intended for immediate publication, Stalin never mentioned Bukharin's article. It would have been embarrassing for Stalin to admit in front of the whole nation that the position criticized by Bukharin as Trotskyite was actually his own.

The first speech against Bukharin was delivered at the joint plenary meeting of the Party's Central Committee and Central Control Commission in April 1929 (it was published in *Pravda*, with major deletions). The meeting was the scene of an important battle that Stalin could not afford to lose. The plenary meeting adopted the theses for the first five-year plan (the plan was later approved by the 16th Party Conference). The plenary meeting heard official criticism of the Right-wing deviation developed in full detail. That criticism was pursued in Stalin's other speeches throughout 1929 and 1930.

Beginning in the middle of 1929, the General Secretary became very outspoken in his statements. Probably he felt during the April 1929 plenary meeting that Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsy had surrendered and, therefore, he spoke in extremely strong terms. A few years earlier, Stalin had restrained Kamenev and Zinoviev who insisted on immediate repressions against Trotsky. Later, when he routed the "*New Opposition*" at the 14th Congress, Stalin did not remove its leaders from their high posts. Repressive actions were always demanded by others, and Stalin was always the last to

give his consent. As long as he was not alone in *"the Party cart,"* it was too early to show his claws. In 1928, Stalin wrote an article titled **"They Have Sunk to the Depths,"** explaining why the Trotskyites had to be arrested and exiled, but decided not to have it published—it first appeared in a volume of his works that came out after the war. Now, he was extremely severe in dealing with the Right-wingers, whose sins were not as horrible and whose surrender had been so prompt and complete. At the April plenary meeting Stalin demanded that Bukharin and Tomsky be removed from their posts (at the Comintern, *Pravda*, and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions) and warned they would be removed from the Politburo at the first sign of disobedience. That speech also contained the first vague hint of the storm of terror which broke out in 1937: Stalin hinted about Bukharin's implication in the Left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries' plot of 1918. Moving from political arguments to accusations of anti-government activity was also a new tactic. Using this tactic was also understandable: the last rival of the six had been defeated, Stalin had no one else to fear, no one to restrain him, and no one to keep as his ally. At that time, Stalin even felt free to admit that the policy which had been charted by the 15th Congress and the whole New Economic Policy developed by Lenin had been discarded. Let us look at some of his speeches and articles of 1929-1930.

*"Formerly the kulak was still relatively weak;... Now, however,... he is able to set aside grain, this currency of currencies... It would be ridiculous now to hope that the kulak can be made to part with his grain voluntarily."*

In the summer of 1928, Stalin spoke about the peasants' discontent and even claimed that the link between the working class and the peasantry was in danger, and he plainly formulated the reason for this: in the absence of grain reserves, the state used emergency



measures to requisition part of contingency grain reserves. Only a few months later, in the spring of 1929, Stalin ridiculed Bukharin for saying that the peasants' discontent was due to "excesses" in grain procurement and provided an explanation of his own: the discontent reflected an aggravation of the class struggle, unavoidable with the advent of socialism. That was the first but—alas!—not the last time that Stalin pronounced the thesis that an aggravation of class struggle was inevitable.

Stalin did not hesitate to use Trotskyist terms and reiterated the theses about the need to impose a "*tribute*," a "*supertax*" on the peasants (on the peasants, not just on the kulaks) and about "*the diversion of resources*" in favour of industry. Those statements were made at the time when famine was beginning to kill people in the Ukraine—a clear indication that the "*supertax*" was *unbearably heavy*.

Stalin's criteria of what was right and what was wrong in the Party's policy changed very rapidly. In late 1927, making the peasants aware of the advantages of collective farming was regarded as a distant goal at the end of a lengthy process governed by its objective laws. Although this process could be speeded up or slowed down by government policies, that major social transformation was gradual and could not be planned to be completed by a certain deadline, not even with a year's margin of error. In 1929, Stalin was certain that the process could be guided at will, and the time-frame could be fixed to a month or a week. "*We have succeeded in turning the main mass of the peasantry away from the old, capitalist path of development...*," "*We have succeeded in bringing about this radical change deep down in the peasantry itself...*"—according to Stalin, all this was accomplished within one year. Lenin had written that the collectivization of agriculture would take years of preparatory work.

This is what Stalin said about the laws and decrees approved by the 15th Party Congress (including the law that prohibited the dispossession of kulaks), *"Do these laws and decisions contradict the policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class? Certainly, they do! Consequently, these laws and decisions must now be set aside in the areas of complete collectivization, which is spreading by leaps and bounds."* The statement was made in January 1930. No Congress had been held since the 15th Congress. This time the decisions of a Party Congress were cancelled by Stalin alone.

This statement brought a question from the delegation of Sverdlovsk: what methods could be used in pursuing the new policy intended to eliminate the kulaks as a class? Stalin answered, *"The principal method of bringing about the elimination of the kulaks as a class is that of mass collectivization. All other measures must be adapted to this principal method. Everything that runs counter to this method or detracts from its effectiveness must be rejected."* This appears to be a tautology. Obviously, complete collectivization means the elimination of the entire class of individual farmers, not only the kulaks. Could it be that Stalin meant there was no need to dispossess the kulaks—that they only had to be made to join the collective farms? No, he made it clear that the kulaks had to be dispossessed and that former kulaks should not be permitted to join collective farms. He criticized the Right-wingers for advocating the organization of cooperatives, as a first step towards the collectivization of agriculture—a policy that he had accepted only a short time earlier and that, incidentally, permitted kulaks to join cooperatives, although their rights were limited. So what was the real meaning of Stalin's answer? It identified the dispossession of the kulaks with the collectivization of agriculture—apparently by chance—since both meant the elimination of the kulaks as a class. Stalin's statement was formally

(and theoretically) correct—so correct as to appear to be quite innocent (if this particular answer is regarded in isolation from other answers given in the same conversation). But in the heat of the “*great turn*” local activists were quite liable to commit the following logical error: since collectivization was a method of eliminating the kulaks as a class, then elimination of the kulaks as a class (otherwise known as “*dispossession of the kulaks*”) was a method of collectivization. Stalin did not commit that error, of course, but he left it to others to commit. Those others went from exiling kulaks to exiling those who sympathized with and helped kulaks and then to using guns to encourage middle peasants to join collective farms.

As for Stalin, he intervened when it was time to rectify “*other people’s*” errors. Having fired the passions and let other people do what he needed, the messiah arrived with his two articles “**Dizzy with Success**” and “**Reply to Collective-Farm Comrades.**”

These two articles and the resulting **Resolution on Combating the Distortions of the Party Policy in the Collective Farm Movement**, adopted by the Party’s Central Committee on March 14, 1930, describe the methods used in the course of the elimination of the kulaks and—more important—those used to collectivize agriculture. Stalin mentions the threat to use weapons and to stop supplying irrigation water (in areas of irrigated farming) and consumer goods, and the use of “*coercion in economic relations with middle peasants.*”

But the catch was to criticize the excesses while retaining the possibility to force the middle peasants into collective farms just as rapidly. For this reason, the resolution briefly mentioned the main excess—the violation of the principle of voluntary participation in the organization of collective farms—and primarily addressed less significant details that could be sacrificed: it criticized “*muddling skips*” from artels to communes,

the closure of churches and markets, the socialization of sheep, goats, and poultry, and the elimination of home gardens. The resolution said that it was imperative to end all that. As for the main issue, the rate of collectivization achieved was to be consolidated. Plans that raised the percentage of collective farmers "*in some areas*" to 90 within days were condemned as "*bureaucratic management by decree*," but the raising of that percentage to 40-50 throughout the nation in 12 to 18 months was termed success. The new resolution reiterated the goal which had earlier been set—to complete the collectivization of agriculture in all the major grain-producing areas within one to two years. The resolution that first formulated that goal (it was adopted in January 1930) ran contrary not only to the decisions of the 15th Party Congress (adopted before Stalin started the radical turn of agricultural policy), but also to the targets of the first five-year plan, adopted by the 16th Party Conference, which was held after that turn began: the plan was for 20 per cent of individual farms to be organized into collective farms within five years—now Stalin boasted he had achieved 40 per cent in just one year. So before criticizing excesses, Stalin formulated the primary demand in the article "**Dizzy with Success**"—"... *to consolidate the successes achieved and to utilize them systematically for our further advancement.*"

In 1929, as well as later, Stalin maintained that the only reason to speed up the collectivization of agriculture was the need to resolve the grain problem. To make his point, he even resorted to statistical tricks: he cited figures showing that the collective and state farms were producing more grain than the kulaks had produced, and presented this as a solution to the problem of "*replacing the kulaks' output with the output of collective farms and state farms.*" But obviously this was no solution at all: the real problem was to ensure that the collective farms produce the aggregate output formerly

produced by the kulaks and the middle and poor peasants who had joined the collective farms. As a matter of fact, the middle peasants had been the main producers of grain, so by "omitting" them Stalin simplified matters considerably. He gave generous promises, "...thanks to the growth of collective farm and state farm movement, we are definitely emerging, or have already emerged, from the grain crisis. And if the development of collective farms is accelerated, there is no reason to doubt that in about three years' time our country will be one of the world's largest grain producers, if not the largest." Three years' time again! Stalin hated making people wait longer than three years. But three years after those promises, the nation, far from becoming the world's largest producer of grain, still had a system of bread-rationing. Although hungry peasants were building collective farms and hungry workers were building the Magnitogorsk and Kuznetsk plants and other projects, they were doing it despite, rather than thanks to, Stalin's leadership. And this was not the last time that Stalin exploited the nation's heroism.

It was obvious that the grain problem could not be resolved by such methods. These methods could only disrupt its solution, and that was exactly what Stalin did. The adverse effects produced by Stalin's methods of collectivization on grain production were not neutralized until several years later and in livestock breeding they lingered on for decades. It is hard to say if the negative effects produced on the peasants' psychology have ever been corrected: the forced collectivization cultivated incorrect attitude to collective farming in many peasants. A collective farm system is generally in line with the peasants' interests, and the evil was not in the collectivization, it was in the wrong methods employed. Those methods did not simply mean bringing high-handed pressure to bear on people—even Stalin was unable to exert pressure on all peasants. To be more

exact, it was a coercion of the objective laws of social development, a coercion which included repressions, deception, heavy taxation, exploitation of the enthusiasm of front-rank peasants, and manipulation of the vile sentiments of the mob (through the distribution of the kulaks' property, for instance). The peasantry had to pay for all this and most peasants considered Stalinist collectivization to be "*coercion*."

But Stalin did reach at least one goal: with a great deal of noise about the danger from the Right, "*the Party cart*" had been turned and Bukharin had fallen out in the process. Even before the 16th Congress, he was removed from the Politburo. Trotsky and later Kamenev and Zinoviev had tried but failed to alter the Party's policy between Congresses. Stalin tried and succeeded. By the 16th Party Congress his victory was complete.

This awareness of victory and unlimited power, not spoiled yet by the economic defeats of 1931-1933, was probably why Stalin was so outspoken during the 16th Party Congress in June 1930. He did not conceal the fact that it had been his initiative to revise the optimum target figures for the first five-year plan (the revision had made the plan utterly unrealistic). In his report to the Congress, Stalin called for "*the further acceleration of the development of our industry*" and claimed that "*people who talk about the necessity of reducing the rate of development of our industry are enemies of socialism...*" He was obviously pleased to report the decision to increase the target figures for the major industries. He even outlined a whole "theory" saying that planning did not end with the development of a plan and that target figures were to be increased as they were reached.

Perhaps he really came to believe that the production of iron and the operation of conveyor belts could be accelerated by decree. Otherwise, he wouldn't have

mentioned the Trotskyites' proposals for the five-year plan in his long speech. Stalin seemed to have forgotten completely what he had said previously, so he boasted that the Party was even more in favour of "*super-industrialization*" than the Trotskyites had been, for the Party was proposing even higher rates of development. Stalin ridiculed Trotsky's old statement (calling it the "*defeatist theory of the descending curve*") that merely repeated the thesis advocated by the Party in 1925-1927. The thesis stated that during the construction of new projects development rates were inevitably lower than in the restoration period. Stalin was careless enough to cite the figures earlier proposed by Trotsky and the Trotskyites and to ridicule them, by comparing them with his own. Trotsky had proposed that industrial output should increase by an average of 18 per cent annually. When Stalin proposed a 47-per-cent growth for the economic year 1930-1931, he did not know, of course, that the actual increase would be 22 per cent in 1930 and 20 per cent in 1931, which would be quite close to Trotsky's figure and very far from his own. What Stalin did know was that Trotsky had proposed his figures when everyone agreed with them (for example, the Kuibyshev commission proposed 18-19 per cent a year). As for Stalin, he later called an even lower rate (12 per cent) record-breaking. But we are not concerned here with specific figures. What really matters is Stalin's desire to jump higher than the Trotskyites. And at the same time Stalin repeated again that the main danger threatening the Party was the danger from the Right!

Well, the statement about the danger from the Right was made mainly for form's sake. Stalin was no longer afraid of the Right-wingers. He had won—and had only to do the mopping up after the fight. But he soon found that the mopping up would not be easy—the battlefield was a terrible mess. The sharp turns had not only crippled agriculture—industry had also been weakened.

Only a short time before, the slogan had been issued calling on everyone to criticize "*the leaders*" and to uphold any criticism even if it contained only five per cent of truth. But there were no Right-wingers among the leaders any longer, so criticism of the leaders would not be aimed against Bukharin, Rykov, or Tomsy—it would be aimed against Stalin and his people who had replaced the Right-wingers (Rykov, for instance, had been replaced by Vyacheslav Molotov at the Council of People's Commissars). The policy of free criticism was reversed. The Party's Central Committee passed a resolution containing a strong criticism of the poet Demian Bedny (1883-1945), one of the most zealous critics. The poet was confused and upset and even wrote a letter to Stalin, asking for explanations. Stalin wrote a long letter to Demian Bedny, with severe reprimands. He wrote that there were "*a number of splendid passages that hit the nail on the head*" in the poet's works (so evidently the truth totalled less than five per cent). But there was also "*a fly in the ointment which spoils the whole picture.*" That was the "*slander of our people, a discrediting of the USSR...*" On a great number of later occasions, so many leaders reprimanded so many satirists just like this!

Subduing Demian Bedny was easy. But it was much more difficult to normalize and manage the national economy, which was constantly getting out of control. In June 1931, Stalin delivered a speech entitled "**New Conditions—New Tasks in Economic Construction.**" He proposed dividing economic associations into smaller units, thereby putting factories under closer supervision by managerial and administrative agencies. But such measures were clearly no good any more; the failure of the policy of hasty acceleration was obvious.

In 1932, Stalin did not speak or write much. All his letters and statements of that year take up 25 pages of volume 13 of his works: brief official messages of



greetings on various occasions, one brief interview on foreign-policy affairs, one reply to letters about the history of Bolshevism, and only one article **"The Importance and Tasks of the Complaints Bureaus."** Stalin did not deliver a single speech in 1932. He did not even speak at the 17th Party Conference, which discussed the guidelines for the second five-year plan and target figures for 1932. All of Stalin's works published that year are shorter than the speech he delivered at an economic managers' conference in June 1931 (during that year, two such conferences were held in five months, and Stalin spoke at both). In earlier periods, Stalin had delivered enough speeches and wrote enough articles to fill a book.

So what was wrong in 1932? The answer is obvious: having achieved a 20-per-cent growth instead of the 45 per cent, which he had pressed for, in 1931, the great leader realized that the economy did not grow on orders. So for the time being, he left it to others to drive the cart of hasty acceleration, which had to be replaced soon. It was Orjonikidze, and not Stalin, who told the 17th Party Conference that industrial output had grown in the previous year by less than half of what had been planned. He also said that the target for 1932 was 36 per cent—just as unrealistic as 45 per cent for the previous year. Molotov and Kuibyshev—and not Stalin—read out the incredible target figures for the second five-year plan (the final guidelines for the second five-year plan, approved by the 17th Party Congress two years before, had nothing in common with the figures approved by the Conference). Stalin had decided to step aside for a while in order to re-appear again as a genius rejecting the old policy. What person would permit himself to recall then that the old policy had been designed and enforced by Stalin himself, despite strong protests from others?

In January 1933, Stalin delivered a report entitled

**"The Results of the First Five-Year Plan"** at a joint plenary meeting of the Party's Central Committee and Central Control Commission—his first speech in 18 months. Naive people would expect a lot of tables in such a report, listing the targets planned and the figures achieved. How is it possible to review the results of economic development without using figures? Stalin showed that this was quite possible. There was not a single table in his report. He did not cite a single target figure for industrial growth. The only two figures in the report were those describing the increase in the gross industrial output and in heavy industry's output. But there was a score of quotations from the Western press about the first five-year plan. And also the famous incantations: *"We did not have a tractor industry. Now we have one. We did not have an automobile industry. Now we have one. We did not have a machine-tool industry. Now we have one..."* and so on. Stalin also spoke at length about socialism's superiority to capitalism and about industrialization being better than no industrialization—as if those things needed to be explained to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party 15 years after the socialist revolution.

But the problem was that Stalin simply could not afford to speak to the point, to explain, for instance, that the debate was not on whether the industrialization programme should be carried out but on how it should be done, and that a specific course had already been adopted and had given certain results. Stalin simply could not afford to say this directly. But the course had to be changed, and the change had to be substantiated. So the General Secretary used the following tactic, *"Was the Party right in pursuing the policy of accelerating development to the utmost? Yes, it was absolutely right."* This statement was followed by the usual arguments *"proving"* that the Party had been right. But then, *"Can it be said that exactly the same policy of accelerat-*

*ing development to the utmost must be pursued in the period of the second five-year plan?"* Many naive people did not even think about raising such a question: it had been answered in the affirmative by the 17th Party Conference, whose decisions were supposed to be in effect. But Stalin was not naive. His answer was this: *"No, it cannot be said. Firstly, as a result of the successful fulfilment of the five-year plan, we have, in the main, already achieved its principal object—to place industry, transport, and agriculture on a new, modern, technical basis. Is there really any need, after this, to spur the country on and urge it forward? Obviously, this is no longer necessary. Secondly, as a result of the successful fulfilment of the five-year plan, we have already succeeded in raising the defence capacity of the country to the proper level. Is there really any need, after this, to spur the country on and urge it forward? Obviously, this is no longer necessary."*

This statement contained two lies—one above the other. The attention was inadvertently focussed on the first lie—the allegation that the principal tasks of industrialization had been carried out. A critical approach must make one wonder if his statement was true. As for the country's defence potential—how was it possible to claim that it had adequate economic support if the USSR lagged behind all the major European capitalist states, potential aggressors: Germany, Britain, and France—in terms of industrial development? And could it be that the creation of *"a new modern technical basis"* for industry, transport, and agriculture had been completed? Those questions were all justified. But they were not dangerous to Stalin. People whose attention was focussed on these questions only were going where Stalin was leading them, wondering only if the hasty acceleration policy was necessary for the future. The question whether it had been needed in the past was skipped: it stood to reason that, as long as the principal

tasks of the industrialization programme had not been completed, there is a need *"to spur the country on and urge it forward"* (what a figure of speech!). It stood to reason that the policy of hasty acceleration had done some good and brought closer the moment of victory in the competition with capitalism. All this was intended to conceal a most unpleasant truth that the haste had put off that moment indefinitely.

Those ideas had to be expressed in short and catchy slogans. The needed words were found: the first five-year period featured a *"zeal for new construction,"* the second five-year plan called for a *"zeal for mastering..."* Each kind of enthusiasm was expressed in specific figures: Stalin explained that a *"zeal for new construction"* had ensured an annual industrial output increase of 22 per cent (which was a slight exaggeration), and that a *"zeal for mastering"* should not aim to provide more than 13-14 per cent a year. Following this meeting, the 17th Party Congress received directives for the second five-year plan. These actually cancelled the directives previously adopted by the 17th Party Conference. At the Congress, some of the proposed target figures were lowered. The real figures achieved by the major industries in the second five-year period were just under the targets.

This was the end of the turn in industry. The problems on agriculture were much more difficult. The fact was that industrial growth was indeed rapid, and few people were aware that industrial development could have been even more successful and at a lower cost. As for agriculture, it was falling apart, instead of developing. Therefore, it was not easy to justify the agricultural policy pursued in the previous period and to explain what should be done in the future and why.

This is what Stalin said about the policy of the previous period, *"...Having tractors and agricultural machinery at its disposal, on the one hand, and taking*

*advantage of the absence of private property in land (the nationalization of the land), on the other, the Party had every opportunity of accelerating the collectivization of agriculture."* It remains obscure how the nationalization of land helped carry out the collectivization of agriculture at such a rate and by such methods and why no one had hit upon the idea of forced collectivization earlier (land had been nationalized in 1917). As for the allegation that it had been possible to speed up collectivization because tractors had become available, it merits special attention, for it had been pronounced before and was later repeated on many occasions.

Speaking at the 17th Party Congress some time later, Stalin cited figures showing that in "*the year of the radical turn*" tractors had averaged less than one per 20 collective farms, and even at the beginning of the second five-year period there was approximately half a tractor per collective farm (and by that time, collectivization had been completed in the major grain-producing regions). As in many other cases, Stalin expressed a generally correct idea that the advantages of high-productivity machines encouraged peasants to engage in collective farming, but this did not fit with the case in question: during the first five-year period tractors had not been a major factor that encouraged peasants to join collective farms, because there had not been enough tractors at that time.

In 1928, tractors accounted for a mere 2.5 per cent of agriculture's motive-energy potential, and draft animals, for 94.8 per cent. Even in 1940, percentage of tractors was not the dominant one—37.1 against 22.3 for draft animals, whose number had sharply decreased. In view of these appalling statistics, it took a bold person like Stalin to pronounce the allegation that the "*radical turn*" in the collectivization of agriculture in 1929 had been due to radical changes in peasants' views which were brought on by the advent of tractors, and not administrative pressure.

The sentiments that the peasants had when they joined collective farms are best illustrated by their attitude to work on those farms and to collectively-owned property. The average, able-bodied member of a collective farm worked a mere 118 workdays in 1932. When the Party's Central Committee discussed with concern the general slump in the peasants' enthusiasm for work in September 1953, the figure averaged 295 workdays.

The main property that peasants contributed to collective farms was cattle. In his novel *Virgin Soil Upturned*, Soviet writer Mikhail Sholokhov provided an impressive description of how hard a poor peasant Shchukar tried to keep his cow as a personal possession. The example is very typical. Even the reduction in the number of cows from 29 million head in 1928 to 19 million in 1934 does not describe the whole picture. A great majority of the 19 million cows that remained were held as personal property by collective farmers or individual peasants. At the end of 1932, when the collectivization of agriculture had mainly been completed, there were only 2.6 million cows owned by the collective farms; even in early 1941, only 5.7 million cows out of the total 27.8 million were owned collectively.

Here is another figure characterizing the care of cattle in the collective farms in the period of the "*radical turn*." In 1932, annual milk yields from the collective farms averaged 931 kilograms per cow. No one keeps a cow that yields less than 10 kilos of milk a day, and 900 kilos of milk a year is about as much as a good goat yields. Even in 1945-1946, when collective farms' cows had survived a drought and a famine and were used to draw plows, they yielded more milk than in the year of "*the radical turn*."

In his report, Stalin pointed out that the collectivization of agriculture no longer had to be speeded up.

That was obvious: collectivization had been, for the most part, completed, so there was no need to speed it up. But that was not the end of the story. The grain output failed to reach the targets; the area sown in grain crops was smaller in 1932 than in 1930, and the gross grain harvest was smaller in 1932 than in 1929 and even than in 1913. But grain just had to be procured. For this reason, Stalin addressed the Central Committee plenary meeting with a second speech **"Work in the Countryside,"** in which he virtually declared war on the collective farm peasantry. First, he reprimanded local governments for permitting collective farms to put aside grain for various funds (food grain for local consumption, fodder grain, insurance reserves, etc.) before delivering grain to the state. He insisted that grain deliveries to the state should be completed first. Second, Stalin told the Party's Central committee that collective farms had been infiltrated by enemies who were using the farms for a struggle against Soviet government. In light of this, the Party had to alter its policy and the methods of its work at the collective farms. Stalin could not make his point more explicitly. Until the end of his life, he regarded the collective farms as his enemy. In a work on economic affairs that he wrote shortly before his death, Stalin pointed out that the collective farms were the main obstacle on the road to Communism.

This is the end of the chapter describing how Stalin acted against Stalin. In later periods, Stalin always appeared the same before the world; he did make unbelievable turns but never acted against himself again. Psychologists and novelists may be interested to find out if Stalin actually changed in the course of "the radical turn" we have just examined or if he had originally been different from the impression he created of himself in other people. But this is irrelevant in a historical and political analysis. We now know the main thing: in 1928 Stalin rejected his own statements, he

trampled on what he had worshipped and began to worship what he had trampled on. In many important theoretical and practical matters, he adopted purely Trotskyist views. The question remains, however, how did he manage to do this and why did he not fall out of "the Party cart" at such a turn?



## Bukharin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev Acting Against Themselves

A leader should look farther ahead than the popular masses—that's what leaders are for. At times a leader has to restrain the majority, in the interest of the majority, even though the majority may not yet be aware of those interests. During the war against Napoleon in 1812, Russian Field Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov (1745-1813) had to restrain his troops who were reluctant to retreat deep into Russian territory, because it was too early to strike back at the invaders. Lenin had to restrain the Party's revolutionary impatience when Soviet Russia was faced to sign a peace treaty with Germany in 1918. In 1925-1927, the Party's leaders restrained the urge of rank-and-file Communists to "*dispossess the kulaks.*" In all those cases, the leader would not have fulfilled his duty to the nation if he had effected the nations' will as interpreted by a majority. So a leader can be guilty of failing to do his duty when he does not restrain the emotions of the masses but joins them leaving the initiative to others.

Stalin was really good at getting other people to commit the error that he wanted to be committed, knowing in advance that it was an error, that the error would be obvious to all some time in the future and punishment would follow, and he insured himself against this. Moreover, he was prepared to take the

initiative to rectify the error. That was what happened when the decision was taken to defend Kiev against the Nazis in 1941. Stalin refused to order Soviet troops to retreat from Kiev before it was too late and even removed Georgi Zhukov (1896-1974) from the post of Chief of the General Staff for insisting too strongly on such an order. But Stalin arranged the whole affair in such a way that the initiative to defend Kiev in an absolutely hopeless situation was directly formulated by others. A detailed description of this appears in the memoirs of Marshal Ivan Bagramyan (1897-1982). Stalin was probably well aware of the drawbacks of General Mikhail Kirponos (1892-1941), who was then in charge of the South-Western Group of Armies. Kirponos was hot-blooded, excessively ambitious, and was unable to insist that Kiev be surrendered. It was the duty of the Commander-in-Chief to restrain such an officer and to keep him from making foolhardy decisions. Stalin, however, played on Kirponos's ambition and led him into a conversation in such a way that the General assured him that Kiev could be defended—this horrified the General's subordinates, for it had been agreed that he would insist on retreating from Kiev. General Kirponos did not retreat but kept on fighting until the end, and most of his troops—and he—were killed in those operations. The blame for allowing so many troops to be pointlessly killed was all put on General Kirponos, for the Supreme Commander-in-Chief just couldn't afford to admit that he himself was guilty of it.

A similar trick had been played in the years when the Soviet people worked to fulfil the first five-year plan. The slogan "*Fulfil the Five-Year Plan in Four Years!*" was not invented by Stalin. It arose from factories, reflecting the noble enthusiasm of the builders of socialism and the lack of economic knowledge in the broad popular masses. Without weakening the nation's feeling

of enthusiasm, the Party had every opportunity to guide it onto the path of improving the quality of output, reducing production costs, and increasing labour productivity, while the targets could have been reached strictly as planned. Instead, Stalin responded by calling on the nation *to fulfil the five-year plan in three years*.

Why did the Leftist trend get the upper hand at that moment? This was probably due to certain objective reasons—primarily to the fact that a majority of the nation was then petty-bourgeois. The six leaders could resist the pressure of petty-bourgeois mentality, or they could yield to it, or they could exploit it deliberately. In the end, Stalin decided to exploit the petty-bourgeois mentality. Earlier, attempts to play on the “leftist” aspirations of the masses had been made by Kamenev and Zinoviev, but they were not as successful. Another member of their opposition group was Georgi Pyatakov—the only person of the six mentioned in Lenin’s “Letter to the Congress” who played no major role of his own after Lenin’s death. Another leader, Trotsky, at times acted as a “Left-winger” and at other times as a Right-winger. He probably was neither—in fact, he was not a Bolshevik at all. Being a remarkable organizer, Trotsky failed to find (or to build) a party that would fully suit his purposes, so in anticipation of the revolution (just a few months before it), he joined the Bolsheviks as the only competent party. But his loyalty and dedication to that Party never became complete.

The last leader of the six was Nikolai Bukharin. Although he was condemned at the end of his career as a “Right deviationist,” Bukharin always was the leader of the Left. He was a Left-winger when Lenin was still alive and even acted against Lenin. But he never used his Leftism as a tactic. He advocated Left-wing views because he sincerely believed they were correct—that was what Lenin thought of Bukharin, anyway.

But what really counts is the social orientation of Left-wing ideas, rather than personal motives causing people to advocate them. That orientation is characterized by the title of Lenin's main polemical work of that period—**“Left-Wing Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality.”** This work contains the famous analysis of the five structures of Russia's economy: Lenin pointed out that the main obstacle impeding the establishment of socialism was the small-scale peasant economy (not large-scale capitalist economy).

Nearly every debate between the Marxists and the Left-wingers appeared to centre (and largely centred) on the rates of advancement towards socialism. Those debates can be compared to an argument about whether a railway line should be crossed after the train passes or ...a little earlier. The Left-wingers seem to be going in the same direction as all other revolutionaries and intend to cross the line in the same place as everyone else—but they want to do it earlier than the others. When they are told that the rush may be suicidal—they are unconcerned and claim that revolutionaries shouldn't be afraid of such trifles. Lenin's argument with the Bukharin group over the signing of a peace treaty with Germany in 1918 was held to establish whether the proletariat of Russia should take a suicidal risk in order to bring a worldwide revolution closer.

The significance and the outcome of that argument are well known, so there is no need to repeat the main facts here. But in connection with the subjects addressed in this particular work, it is interesting to examine a few quotations from Nikolai Bukharin's speech at the 7th Party Congress, which finally accepted Lenin's proposal to sign a peace treaty with Germany. Here is the most characteristic statement.

*“Comrade Lenin said at the end of his speech that he would sign any peace treaty to be able to evacuate workers from Petrograd; I state that this is nothing but*

*rhetoric, resulting not from cold-blooded calculation but from obvious excitement by an emotion, a very good emotion, of course, but it is far from cold-blooded calculation, which tells us that, if the need arises, we can and should sacrifice dozens of thousands of workers."*

One should not get the impression that Bukharin treated the loss of human life lightly, because of the above quotation. The statement should be viewed in the context of the whole argument. Bukharin thought he was merely returning reproaches for "*revolutionary rhetoric*" to Lenin and repeating his calls for cold-blooded calculation of the correlation of strength. The "*Left-wingers*" talked more than others about the need to protect the workers and peasants of the Ukraine, the Baltic regions, and other areas that the peace treaty left under German occupation. Bukharin regarded the people as "*the masses*" and his speech at the 7th Congress characterizes the "*Left-wingers*" attitude to those "*masses*." Here are a few phrases to support this point, "*we should mold human material,*" "*we should make the masses understand,*" "*we should elevate the masses up to our own level,*" "*it is our sacred duty to press on the masses and to involve them in the struggle.*" He even believed that occupation by the Germans was an effective method of "*pressing on the masses*"; he maintained that the war should be fought and that it would not be too bad if the Soviet forces had to retreat because of workers' and peasants' refusal to fight. Let them see what it means "*to live under German occupation,*" Bukharin said, "*when they have an iron nose ring in their nostrils, believe me, comrades, we will have a real sacred war.*"

Years later, when Bukharin was condemned as a "*Right-winger,*" he had many reasons to recall those speeches and especially the statement that the revolution could develop at the cost of the lives of front-rank workers.

The fate of Bukharin, the number-one theoretician and a favourite of the Party, shows that in the course of a revolutionary offensive trends towards petty-bourgeois "Leftism" were very attractive and even irresistible to many people, that people could be easily encouraged to follow those trends, which were difficult to stop, even when the stopping was done by Lenin. Bukharin taught very good lessons about this, and Stalin was an excellent student. Several years later, Stalin did not mention the fact that Bukharin had been a "Left-winger," but remembered his lessons well and described the dangers of "Leftism" very correctly and very impressively. When he characterized two deviations in the struggle against the kulaks (the underestimation and the overestimation of the danger of the kulaks) **in his speech at the 14th Party Congress**, Stalin said, *"Both deviations are dangerous, one is as bad as the other; it is wrong to ask which of them is more dangerous; but it is possible and necessary to ask: against which deviation is the Party best prepared to fight? If we ask Communists what the Party is better prepared for—to strip the kulaks, or not to do that but to go in for an alliance with the middle peasants—I think that 99 Communists out of 100 would say that the Party is best prepared for the slogan: strike the kulaks. Just let them—they would strip the kulaks in a moment. As for refraining from dekulakization and pursuing the more complex policy of isolating the kulaks by entering into an alliance with the middle peasants—that is something not so easily assimilated."*

Stalin was aware that a "Left-wing" policy was less difficult to pursue. This fact, however, had been known for a long time: Lenin had foreseen all those problems, and a well-balanced plan had been developed for the elimination of the petty-bourgeois "Leftism" of the masses under the Party's political guidance. The Party did not accept the "Leftism" advocated by Trotsky and Preobrazhensky in 1923, nor the "Leftism" advocated

by Kamenev and Zinoviev in 1925, nor the "Leftism" advocated by all of them in 1927. The question is: why did the Party accept Stalin's "Leftist" policy in 1928-1929?

We could find certain specific circumstances that promoted the "*acceleration*" enthusiasm when the first five-year plan was developed. For example, at the 16th Party Conference, which approved the "optimal" targets, representatives of regions and republics all kept asking for bigger assignments. The Ukraine, Siberia, the Urals, and other regions all wanted larger target figures. At the 17th Party Congress, when the second five-year plan was discussed, similar requests were heard, but this time Grigori Orjonikidze remarked that the larger figures which some delegates wanted would last them for ten years instead of five. It should be noted that when the first five-year plan was drawn up, only a few years before, Orjonikidze had ardently advocated the "*acceleration*" course. Also, it should be taken into account that Orjonikidze had a lot of weight in any campaign against any opposition or deviationist group. This was due to his personal prestige and position in the Party: at the time when the Party waged the struggle against the Right-wingers, Orjonikidze was the Chairman of the Central Control Commission. His personal honesty is unquestionable: he proved it not only by his life but also by his death. He was not pretending—he sincerely was mistaken. He believed Stalin, as did a majority of the Central Committee members. Could it be that all those people did not have enough political experience? No, that is impossible. The point is that members of the Central Committee, People's Commissars, and all other leaders lived in the same atmosphere as the whole nation and were certainly influenced by other people's opinions and the nation's enthusiasm. And, of course, the leading members of the Party were especially careful not to lag behind the nation.

This brings us to a subject that is closely connected historically with Kamenev and especially with Zinoviev. A quotation from the verbatim report of the 14th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks).

*"We are against creating the theory of a 'leader,' we are against the creation of a 'leader'. We are against a situation in which the Secretariat, which is actually in charge of both policy and organizational matters, is placed above the policy-making body. We insist that our top echelon be organized in such a way as to have a Politburo with really unlimited authority, comprising all the policy-makers of our Party, and a Secretariat subordinate to the Politburo and responsible for the practical implementation of its decisions. We cannot consider it normal and believe it is bad for the Party if a situation remains in which the Secretariat is in charge of both policy and organizational matters and actually predetermines policy decisions. This is what should be done, comrades. Anyone who does not agree with me can draw his own conclusion. It is a speaker's right to start where he wants to. You think that I should begin by saying that my personal opinion is that our General Secretary is not the person who can unite the Old Bolshevik headquarters around him. I do not believe this is the main question of policy. I do not believe that this issue is more important than that of theoretical strategy. I believe that if the Party adopted a clear-cut policy strategy and strongly dissociated itself from the deviations currently supported by part of the Central Committee, this issue would not now be on the agenda. But I should finish my statement. Because I have repeatedly said this to Comrade Stalin himself and because I have repeatedly said this to a group of my Leninite comrades, I will repeat it here at the Congress: I have arrived at the conviction that Comrade Stalin is unable to do the job of uniting the Bolshevik headquarters. I started this part of my speech with the*



*words that we are against the theory of one ruler, we are against creating a leader! With these words I also conclude my speech."*

These remarkable words were hurled at Stalin by Lev Kamenev, a member of the Party's Politburo and Chairman of the Council of Labour and Defence. He spoke them at the 14th Party Congress, on December 21, 1925 (which was Stalin's birthday). This statement clearly indicates that Stalin's adversaries did not surrender easily and not all members of the Party were deceived by him. It should be noted that a majority of the delegates at that Congress were later eliminated by Stalin, because he began to consider them to be his enemies. Kamenev's words at the 14th Congress sound absolutely correct today and are very close to what Lenin wrote in his "**testament.**" So why did the Congress respond to Kamenev's speech by giving Stalin an ovation?

Kamenev himself and his ally Zinoviev were to blame for this. The above-quoted statement, bold and wise, does not appear to be bold or wise when taken in the context of all that the opposition said at the Congress. Kamenev's statement about Stalin lasted just a minute or two and was drowned in a lot of talk about "*theoretical issues*" (the entire speech lasted more than an hour and was followed by a similar speech delivered by Grigori Sokolnikov\*), and the opposition's *main speaker*, Grigori Zinoviev, did not say a word about the need to replace Stalin. In his report, he made attempts to find "*deviations*" in the Central Committee's policy, and that was wrong in principle: the Central Committee's policy was at that time correct in its main aspects. Also, that was naive from a tactical viewpoint—nobody could beat Stalin on that battlefield! But aren't

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\* Grigori Sokolnikov (1888-1939) joined the Party in 1905.

we too hard on those people? Whatever their faults, they were the first to tell the Party what the future held for it. The fact is that their move at that time actually made Stalin stronger instead of weakening him. They exposed themselves by initiating the wrong war against him and let him score an easy victory. They were all defeated—three top-level figures—Trotsky and then Kamenev and Zinoviev. If Georgi Pyatakov is added to them, that totals four of Stalin's five rivals. In the summer of 1917, the 6th Party Congress in one of its resolutions called Trotsky and Zinoviev—along with Lenin—“*leaders of the world proletariat.*” Just over a decade later, they permitted Stalin to remove them from the political scene—and Stalin in a way added their prestige to his own. He won, and usurped those people's glory for what they accomplished in the revolution and the Civil War. He then was in a position to declare any war, just or unjust, against anyone.

Why can it be said that those people “exposed” themselves? First of all because they spoke too openly against what they had advocated. They did so not only then when they formed an alliance with Trotsky, the man at whom they had previously cast stones; that made their fall complete. They spoke against themselves even at the 14th Party Congress. Let us take the issue of the Party's policy with regard to the peasantry. The policy which Kamenev and Zinoviev criticized at the 14th Congress had been introduced at the 14th Party Conference just a few months before. All the sessions at that Conference were chaired by Lev Kamenev. In his opening speech there, he noted the “*record-breaking*” industrial growth and approved of the “*turn towards the countryside.*” The 14th Party Conference was concluded by Lev Kamenev's words which were full of optimism, “*The Comintern... may rest assured that by pursuing the correct policy of strengthening the socialist elements of our economy we will prove that, even with the low rate of*

*the development of the world revolution, socialism should be built and that we will build it in alliance with our country's peasantry and that it will be built."*

These words were spoken on April 29, 1925. This is what Lev Kamenev told the 14th Party Congress on December 21 of the same year, *"What is the real danger? What with the world revolution being delayed, with trends towards stabilization being established inside and outside the country, with the nation growing... rich, with the petty-bourgeois environment in which the working class is living, elements embellishing NEP are inevitably growing."*

It was difficult for the delegates of the 14th Congress to believe Kamenev's sincerity.

At the 13th Congress, he had said, *"In answer to the question where our plan is, I say this: our plan is not in these abstract diagrams. The plan that our Party has been fulfilling over the past few months starting with the debate is expressed in these two words—the monetary reform. There could be no other plan, meaning that this is a real thing and the core of all the development of the national economy, meaning that we have a certain link by which we could pull the whole chain,—so there could have been no other plan in these past few months."*

The economic situation at the time of the 14th Congress was different, of course, from what it had been when the 13th Congress was held: the monetary reform had long since been completed, the postwar restoration of industry had also been completed, and there had emerged many new ways of exerting influence, including direct influence, on production through planning. No one would have said in December 1925 that a monetary reform could be regarded as the only plan. But the general principle remained that the forms of economic planning should be selected in accordance with the nature of economic priorities, so at any given moment some forms were more suitable than others and some

were utterly unsuitable. But Lev Kamenev, who had spoken so reasonably at the 13th Party Congress, made the following remark at the 14th Congress in December 1925: *"Can it be that you want us all to face a situation when the psychology and ideology of the peasantry crystallizes in such a way that it will not want to give us as much grain as we need for the development of socialism nor give us that grain at prices which would be good for us, the workers' state?"*

Kamenev's intonation and reasoning were clearly different from what they had been at the 13th Congress. At that Congress, Kamenev would have said that if the peasants did not want to deliver the planned amount of grain, the plan was to blame and not the peasants (that was exactly what the audience replied to Kamenev at the 14th Congress: that the plan was bad, that it was all the fault of the Council of Labour and Defense, the supreme economic body, and its Chairman, Kamenev). After the 14th Congress, that truth did no longer belong to Kamenev, it belonged to others. Those others, including Stalin, explained, first, that the plan should and could fix a realistic price for grain instead of unilaterally favourable prices and, second, that grain and other reserves had to be created for manoeuvring in case profiteers tried to raise prices to an unreasonable level. Kamenev tried to defend himself with vague statements such as: *"...I won't say: let us dispossess the peasants. I am only saying that the course should be set correctly..."* But those efforts seemed naive. If one said it was necessary to take grain from the peasants without using economic methods, he didn't have to add that administrative tools should be used—no third option existed. So Kamenev immediately had this contradiction thrust at him. Anastas Mikoyan\* said, *"If you're saying that the kulaks are stronger than the Party be-*

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\* Anastas Mikoyan (1895-1978) joined the Party in 1915.

*lieves them to be, then you have to make your choice: either more concessions or a thrashing for them now, either dispossession or more concessions in order to prevent a disruption of economic construction."*

Stalin did not have to create new political tools for himself in 1928—he just borrowed what the opposition had prepared in 1925-1927, and he used those tools quite extensively.

Also, the idea to criticize the thesis that the kulaks *could be integrated* into the socialist system was not Stalin's. At the 14th Party Congress, Kamenev repeatedly criticized Bukharin for advocating that thesis. But at that time Stalin spoke in defence of Bukharin. As a matter of fact, all Stalin's major steps in 1928-1930 had been proposed by the opposition some time earlier. Opposition leaders not only invented the propaganda phrases later adopted by Stalin but also prompted the main tactic of putting on a "Leftist" disguise before taking steps to alter the Party's strategy, while accusing others of Right deviationism. As for the formation of the Leningrad delegation to the 14th Congress (which actually made up the opposition), that was an invaluable lesson for someone who was preparing a "*turn of the cart*."

There was one really remarkable detail about the Leningrad delegation—nearly all the delegates there were members of the opposition, while other delegations had very few or none at all. This was most unusual. This could not be attributed to some special social features of the Leningrad Party organization: in fact, that organization was the Party's front-rank unit, with a really proletarian membership, the least susceptible to petty-bourgeois influence. The standard explanation is that shortly before the 14th Congress the Leningrad Party organization was deceived by its leaders. Indeed, the leaders of the organization (headed by Grigori Zinoviev) played a crucial role, but they used more reliable meth-

ods than deception. The opposition did control the Leningrad newspapers, but those papers were not the only sources of information available in Leningrad. The national daily *Pravda* advocated the strategy followed by a majority of the Party's Central Committee members. Besides, the opponents of the organization's leaders expressed their views at district and provincial conferences, so the Leningrad organization was well aware of the positions of both sides. The opposition was unable to deceive or to gag the workers of Leningrad: this is proved by the speeches of greetings to the Congress delivered by representatives of the metallurgical plant and other Leningrad factories. To gag the workers, the opposition would have to work hard later, if it scored a victory at the Congress. But at that stage, all the opposition needed was to put its men in the delegation, and the Zinoviev team managed to do that.

This success could be ensured by only one factor—the work of the Party apparatus, a powerful organizing force. The opposition fully controlled the Party apparatus of the Leningrad province, and it made full use of its potential. At the 14th Congress, delegates spoke little about the struggle for the apparatus—but enough to give one an idea about it.

Delegate Struppe of Pskov told the Congress about preparations for the first Party Conference of the North-Western region, which was to comprise five provinces, including Leningrad. The conference never took place, because the Party organization of Pskov province refused to participate. The conflict centred on the distribution of seats in the new Regional Committee: Leningrad demanded at least four-fifths of all seats for its representatives but was offered not more than three-quarters. The opposition attempted to gain control of the Party apparatus of five provinces instead of just one. The struggle was waged for this, while Party strategy was not discussed.

Another example: Vyacheslav Molotov showed to the Congress the minutes of the meeting of the Party Committee of Leningrad province held shortly before the provincial conference. With appealing simplicity the lists of the members of the new Committee and the new Control Commission of the provincial Party organization, drawn up by the old Committee, had been entered on the record. Therefore, if the Committee of the provincial Party organization had been able to elect itself and have the resolution endorsed by the conference, it meant that the Committee was able to have any resolution endorsed by the conference. It managed to put its men into the Leningrad delegation to the 14th Congress and to leave out those who supported the majority in the Party's Central Committee (even a former Secretary of the Committee of the provincial Party organization, Komarov, was not elected).

Some facts about the attempt to gain control of the Central Committee apparatus were revealed to the 14th Party Congress by Kliment Voroshilov. With an innocence which was probably feigned, he described a secret meeting of several members of the Party's Central Committee in a cave near Kislovodsk in the Caucasus, where it had been planned to reorganize the Central Committee Secretariat in such a way as to strip Stalin of power.

It is impossible to understand the reasons for Kamenev's and Zinoviev's rejection of the terms of reconciliation they were offered just before the 14th Congress, unless one takes into account the struggle for the control of the apparatus. Under those terms, Kamenev and Zinoviev would have retained all their posts, losing "only" the part of the Party apparatus they controlled—but that was their main asset. The struggle waged by Kamenev and Zinoviev was intended to gain control of the Party apparatus, and policy issues were only used for disguise—but this brought more fire down

on them instead of giving them protection. In the struggle to gain control of the apparatus, Kamenev and Zinoviev had no chances against Stalin, although they probably saw it differently. Was there any chance of winning, if they had tried fighting on some other battlefield? No, there was no other issue in 1925 on which they could challenge Stalin except the control of the Party apparatus: he did not deviate from the Party's strategy until 1928. But this also means that Stalin would have been unable to defeat them in 1925. Therefore, if the conflict had been postponed until 1928, Stalin would have had to fight not only against Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskey, but also against Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Sokolnikov, and even against Trotsky, whose defeat became complete only after he formed an alliance with Zinoviev. In other words, if Kamenev and Zinoviev had not decided to fight Stalin where he was unbeatable—in a battle for control of the apparatus—the principle of collective leadership within the Party's top echelon would probably have survived for a longer period of time and possibly even have ensured a degree of stability in the Party's Central Committee that would have made it impossible for anyone to eliminate that principle.

Kamenev's and Zinoviev's behaviour at the 14th Party Congress fitted perfectly with Stalin's aims; Stalin actually wanted Kamenev and Zinoviev to do what they did. This is proved by the following episode, described by Valerian Kuibyshev in his concluding remarks on the Central Control Commission's report to the Congress. Kuibyshev tried to show off Stalin's peaceableness and said that during the conference of the Party organization of Leningrad province, when it became obvious that an opposition delegation to the 14th Congress was being formed, a majority of Central Committee members even thought of sending a few representatives to that conference. These representatives would have in-



formed the Leningrad Communists about the Central Committee's opinion, thereby preventing any moves against the Party's strategy during the Congress. "*None other than Stalin spoke against that, because there still was hope that things would not get that far. There was hope that the comrades would come to their senses and stop the struggle.*" The question is: what was the reason for that hope if it was proposed not to dissuade the Leningrad Communists from doing what they were doing and to just let them form an opposition delegation? It should be added that the conference of the Moscow Party organization in its resolution formulated very serious accusations against the opposition (using words like liquidationism and "axelrodism")—that was done with the Politburo's approval (the fact was not denied at the Congress). The accusations were so strong that the majority at the Congress did not even repeat them in any of the resolutions, although the setup of strength made this quite possible. Obviously, Stalin took his step of "goodwill" in order not to scare the opposition before it was time to strike. It was one thing to defeat Zinoviev at the conference of the Leningrad Party organization, undermining his prestige there, but it was a different thing altogether to defeat Zinoviev and Kamenev at a Party Congress (he was sure he would defeat them, but they had to speak out first), thereby undermining the positions of the two men as leaders of the Party as a whole. A contribution to Stalin's cause was made by a senior Bolshevik Aron Solts,\* "*the Party's conscience,*" who said at the Congress that debates should be followed by "practical moves." This was perfectly legitimate and in full accordance with Lenin's behests.

The opposition gave Stalin not only a favourable battlefield but also some useful experience. Zinoviev in

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\* Aron Solts (1872-1945) joined the Party in 1898.

practice showed that the apparatus was able to lead even a front-rank provincial organization in the direction it wanted—even though for just a short period of time and even though it could alter the organization's position on just one issue, it was important to do it at the right time and with regard to the really crucial issue. Furthermore, Zinoviev showed that the apparatus could ensure turns against the Leninist course and against its own leaders' oaths, because the apparatus was the true organizing force of a Party organization.

It should be remembered, however, that the truth is difficult to find when the actions of certain persons are analysed in isolation. The actions of Kamenev and Zinoviev are interesting not only in themselves, but only because they enable us to gain a deeper insight into the general movement whose features are mirrored in those actions.

What else is there to analyse? It has been repeated many times and it should be clear by now that there were workers (not very many) and peasants (more numerous than industrial workers). With the advancement of industrialization, the number of workers would be growing, but it was necessary for the time being to ensure protection from the petty proprietors' influence. Everything is clear but then nothing is clear. It isn't clear how that influence worked. When all of a sudden Stalin told the Party that Bukharin (the leader of the Communist International and *Pravda's* editor-in-chief), Rykov (the man who had succeeded Lenin as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars), and Tomsy (the Chairman of the national Trade Unions' Council) had become the exponents of the kulaks' interests, this sounded... odd and it appeared as such to many. For instance, the Chairman of the Central Council Commission, Orjonikidze, said in 1929, *"We may hear this remark: how can you make such an accusation against Bukharin? Does Bukharin favour capitalism?"*

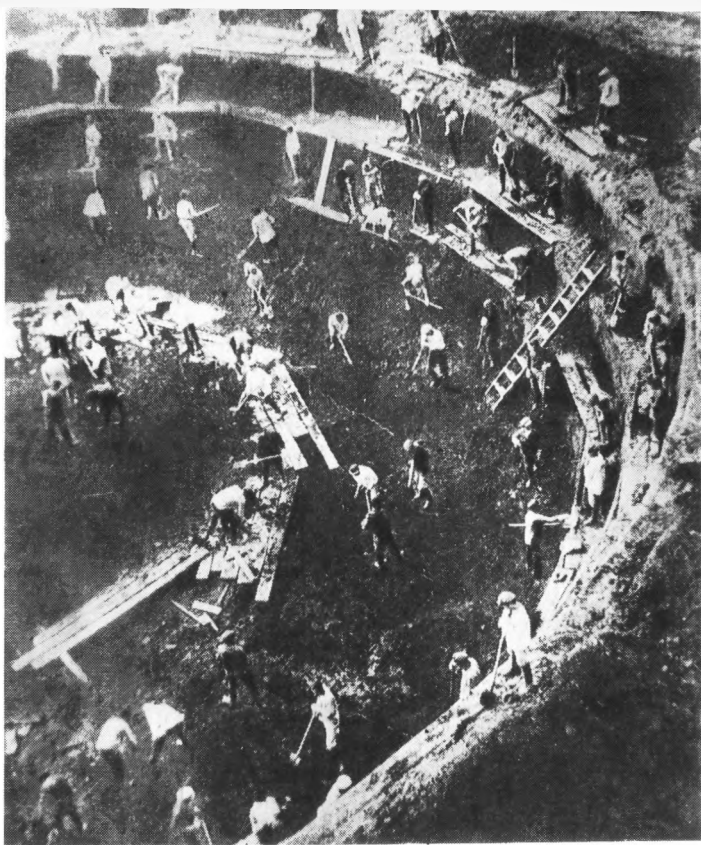
*Wasn't he with us in October 1917? No, comrades, Bukharin certainly does not want capitalism to be restored and he was with the whole Party in October 1917. Moreover, I'm sure that he is prepared to wage a ruthless struggle against the bourgeoisie now. But it is the practical policy that really counts, and not the wish. As for Comrade Bukharin's policy, it is pulling us back and not forward."*

Certainly, Orjonikidze's intonation was different from Stalin's. He spoke about a comrade committing an error, not about an enemy. He formulated questions that Stalin never permitted. In December 1927, Orjonikidze told the 15th Party Congress that the Trotskyites and Zinovievites had been expelled from the Party. How could he believe Stalin when the latter used the Trotskyite-Zinovievite ideas in his own policy just a few months later? Why did thousands of other people believe Stalin? Many of them were just as honest and as experienced as Orjonikidze and many later paid just as much for their trustfulness.

The answers can't be found, if one adopts the black-and-white thinking, so common in Stalin's speeches: there are workers, who are faultless, and there are petty proprietors and nothing in between. Did that approach always prevail? No. Lenin was free from the liberal intellectuals' tendency to flatter the workers; he always examined specific sectors of the working class, and not "the workers in general," starting with *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. When they were led by Lenin, the Bolsheviks were even aware of differences between the proletariat of Petrograd and the proletariat of Moscow, between the metalworkers and the miners, etc. After the Civil War, Lenin gave special attention to differences within the working class. In his "testament" he raised the issue of the Party's stability in connection with its membership even before he examined the Central Committee's stability in connection with the



The adverse effects produced by Stalin's methods of collectivization on grain production were not neutralized until several years later and in livestock breeding they lingered on for decades. Those methods did not simply mean bringing high-handed pressure to bear on people—even Stalin was unable to exert pressure on all peasants. Although hungry



peasants were building collective farms and hungry workers were building the Magnitogorsk and Kuznetsk plants and other projects, they were doing it despite, rather than thanks to, Stalin's leadership. And this was not the last time that Stalin exploited the nation's heroism.

relations among the six leaders. In 1922, the Party development policy was included on the agenda of the 11th Party Congress, the last Congress attended by Lenin. At that Congress, Lenin delivered the main policy report and closely supervised the drafting of the resolution on Party development. Shortly before the meeting of the Party's Central Committee which had prepared proposals for the Congress, Lenin wrote two letters to Central Committee members. This is what Lenin wrote about the problem, *"Since the war, the industrial workers of Russia have become much less proletarian than they were before, because during the war all those who desired to evade military service went into factories. This is common knowledge. On the other hand, it is equally undoubted that, taken as a whole (if we take the level of the overwhelming majority of Party members), our Party is less politically trained than is necessary for real proletarian leadership in the present difficult situation, especially in view of the tremendous preponderance of the peasantry which is rapidly awakening to independent class politics. Further, it must be borne in mind that the temptation to join the ruling party at the present time is very great. It is sufficient to recall all the literary productions of the Smena Vekh writers to see that the types who have been carried away by the political successes of the Bolsheviks are very remote from everything proletarian."* And further: *"...We must without fail, in order not to deceive ourselves and others, define the term 'worker' in such a way as to include only those who have acquired a proletarian mentality from their very conditions of life. But this is impossible unless the persons concerned have worked in a factory for many years—not from ulterior motives, but because of the general conditions of their economic and social life."*

*"If we do not close our eyes to reality we must admit that at the present time the proletarian policy of the Party is not determined by the character of its membership, but*

*by the enormous undivided prestige enjoyed by the small group which might be called the Old Guard of the Party. A slight conflict within this group will be enough, if not to destroy this prestige, at all events to weaken the group to such a degree as to rob it of its power to determine policy.”\**

Lenin's letters also contain two important proposals involving specific figures. First, he believed that the Party's membership (300,000 to 400,000) was too large and proposed reducing it by expelling non-proletarian elements. Second, he wrote that a short probationary period could be left only for real workers—people who had been employed as workers “*at a large industrial enterprise*” for at least 10 years.

Therefore, in Lenin's opinion, the main danger of petty-bourgeois influence was not that peasants would directly affect the Party, for you couldn't mistake a peasant for a worker, but that the main danger came from workers who only yesterday were peasants, from so-called semi-workers. Was this formulation of the problem unexpected in 1922?

“*Class disintegration*” was a frequently used political term. It referred to the “disintegration of the working class.” After the Party had dealt with the most urgent priorities following the Civil War at its 10th Congress, it discussed Party building at a national conference in December 1921 and again at the 11th Congress four months later. The main report at the Congress was delivered by Grigori Zinoviev, and, as Lenin mentions in his letter, Zinoviev also drafted the resolution. When he delivered the main report at the Congress on the Central Committee's instructions, Zinoviev agreed that the Party's membership should not be increased just for the sake of increasing it, that only really deserving persons should be admitted into the Party, that semi-

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\* V. I. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 256-257.

workers should be filtered out, and that the danger of class disintegration should not be forgotten. This is what he said at the 14th Party Congress in 1925, but when he delivered the opposition's main report, he already said the following: *"We have made considerable progress in the economic realm; this is recognized by everyone, and we are approaching the prewar level. The class disintegration of the proletariat has stopped; people's activity is brimming over, the workers' cultural development is improving, etc., etc."*

Zinoviev's enthusiasm was greater than he had words to express, so he said *"etc., etc."* But where was the former theoretician and experienced politician? Who replaced that leader with the naïve speaker who failed to understand the obvious truth that certain economic achievements could only stabilize the composition of the working class but that it would take years to mould the workers into true proletarians? Remember: Lenin believed this process would require at least ten years. Furthermore, that was a time when the composition of the working class was not stabilizing. No one moved out of cities and towns any more, but "class disintegration" continued, moving in a different direction: great numbers of people left rural areas and moved to urban communities, and, despite Zinoviev's great optimism, very few of them were workers who had earlier moved to the countryside and were returning to their homes. Zinoviev had no statistics describing that process, but the Chairman of the Trade Unions' Council Tomsky did. He said the following **at the 14th Party Congress**: *"What elements are joining industry's work force? Some of those are proletarian elements, of course—workers' children, mostly Komsomol members. They are a young and fresh component. An insignificant part is made up by former workers who are returning to the cities from rural areas from which they have been driven by the famine. But a majority are fresh peasant elements, young peasants."*



*They are the new workers who joined the industrial work force in the past two years and who are increasing it by 14 per cent a year. Those people have no connection with the history of the working class of the prerevolutionary years, they don't know what a factory is, they have not been educated by work at a factory, they were not actively engaged in the Civil War—in the workers' heroic struggle that took place during those years... Probably I should speak in some detail about that new type of workers, people who have come from rural areas and who think of themselves to some extent as guests at the factories and plants, as people who will not remain there forever. On Saturdays, these workers go to their villages taking along their week's pay and come back on Monday, bringing along bread, potatoes, and other food for the week. At first these people stay away from workers' public activities. These people have brought along numerous peasants' views and a new, very peculiar attitude towards the factories, which they do not regard, which they are not used to regarding, as something that is really their own—the way factories are regarded by genuine workers, who lived through the revolution, who organized production at their factories, with great difficulties and strain, who have experienced the sorrow of ruin and the joy of restoration."*

Fourteen per cent a year is an impressive increase, but in certain industries the figures were unbelievable. For example, the membership of the Builders' Union grew from 107,000 to 575,000 in just two years and nine months. Builders were, at that time, seasonal workers, and nearly all of them were semi-workers or peasants. That part of the working class grew the most rapidly during the restoration period in 1923-1925. When the industrialization programme was launched in 1926 and many new industrial projects were started, the number of builders grew even more rapidly and they began to move to other industries in great numbers. Many work-

ers at the Stalingrad Tractor Works, the Gorky Automobile Plant, the Kuznetsk and Magnitogorsk plants, and many other major enterprises actually built those projects before they took jobs there. Peasants came to Moscow, where they were employed to build the metro, the AMO\* Automobile Plant, the Ball-Bearing Plant, and other projects, and settled in the city.

According to recently published statistics, the census taken in August 1920 counted 1.7 million industrial workers—of them the regular workers did not account for more than 40 per cent. According to the 1918 census, 64 per cent of workers were literate. It is difficult to say how many of them kept their jobs in the subsequent years: the war was over, but the famine was still ahead. In any case, 40 per cent of 1.7 million makes not more than 700,000—that was the initial figure of the restoration period, from which the working class began to overcome its disintegration. Let us remember this figure. Then factory workers rapidly grew in number, and many jobless townspeople were employed at first. But in 1926, there was an acute shortage of skilled workers, while the unemployed were mainly unskilled office and factory workers. In 1922-1925, the period described by Zinoviev at the 14th Party Congress, 45 per cent of the people who had recently become metalworkers in Leningrad were the children of peasants, factory workers, or handicraftsmen. The metalworkers of Leningrad were supposed to be the vanguard of the nation's working class. Just under nine per cent of the recently employed metalworkers had land of their own. In other areas and in other trades, the figures were different: almost 24 per cent of the miners in the Donets coal-fields and 25 per cent of the metalworkers of the

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\* AMO (the Russian abbreviation for "Moscow Automobile Company") was the name of Soviet-made trucks and buses manufactured in 1924-1934 by the AMO Factory (now the Likhachev Truck Plant in Moscow).

Moscow region employed in those years had plots of land in the countryside.

Forty-five per cent of the people who joined the working class in 1926-1929 came from peasant families, almost seven per cent of those people came from office workers' families, and almost 23 per cent of the total number had land of their own. Those who retained their land also retained economic links with the countryside. In 1929, 62 per cent of the metalworkers who had land went to their villages to do agricultural work. Only 26 per cent of those metalworkers did not sow crops or keep cattle, but 47 per cent did sow crops and kept cattle.

In the years when the nation worked on the first five-year plan, the peasantry became the number-one supplier of new workers. It took some time before those new employees could be called workers. Remember that in 1920 there were 1.7 million industrial workers, less than half of them were regular workers. During the period when the first five-year plan was fulfilled, the national economy employed 12.5 million new factory and office workers, 8.5 million of whom were former peasants. Training was rapid, but some problems remained. In 1932 absenteeism was nine times greater in days per worker than in 1934. It goes without saying that political experience is more difficult to obtain than labour skills.

Let us recall the economic development in the 1930s: a leap in 1930-1931, a recession in 1932-1933, and steady development afterwards. Let us also examine the statistics describing the number of peasants who settled in the cities in the late 1920s and in the 1930s: 1,062,000 settled in 1928; 1,392,000 in 1929; 2,633,000 in 1930; 4,100,000 in 1931; 2,719,000 in 1932; 772,000 in 1933; and 2,452,000 in 1934. Many more peasants moved to the cities in those years but a lot of them only stayed for some time and then went back to their homes. In fact,

those who returned to their homes were much more numerous than those who actually settled in the cities (and who are only included in the above-cited statistics).

It was in this situation that the delegates of the 14th Party Congress argued whether the position of the working class became stable after the elimination of the economic dislocation. These debates had considerable practical significance: it was supposed to tell the Party how it should regulate the structure of its membership. Shortly before the Congress, a member of the opposition, Sarkis, wrote an article insisting that measures should be taken to ensure that workers total at least 90 per cent of the Party membership within a year. In his report to the Congress, Stalin ridiculed this demand and cited figures showing that to ensure that percentage, Party membership would have to be increased from 900,000 to 5,000,000 within one year, while the country at that time had a total of 7,000,000 workers, including agricultural workers and those employed in small-scale industry. Those figures, it seemed, put an end to the debate. But, Grigori Zinoviev took the floor and his report criticized a Tula region newspaper for proposing that a certain number of peasants be admitted to the Party and then made the following remark: *"But when together with these proposals to admit peasants we hear warnings against backward workers—what kind of policy is that? I have read Comrade Bukharin's speech at the Moscow conference, which contains a lot of pessimism about this; he explains what the working class is today, how much new, unassimilated, raw material it comprises, etc. I am extremely surprised. Where does so much raw material come from? Don't we understand that the process will continue in such a way that the core of the working class will be assimilating the raw material and not vice versa? Why is it feared that we may admit more new members than we'll be able to assimilate?... where does this fear of the working class come from? I don't under-*

*stand. (Voices: 'There is no fear.')* But then what is the meaning of these two articles and of all the noise against Sarkis?... how is it possible to take out certain excerpts, argue against them and accuse people of "axelrodism"?... Now, the label of "axelrodism" is being affixed to the comrades who reiterate the fundamental thesis of Bolshevism, that our Party should grow more and more proletarian in membership."

Zinoviev also explained what "axelrodism" was. A Menshevik, Pavel Axelrod, had proposed organizing a "party of all working people" to act against the Bolsheviks. But much had been said about Axelrod before, namely: "If you put on your glasses, take the statistics, and say: only 50 or 49 per cent of the Party's membership are workers and, therefore, this is not a party of workers—that would be very simple and cheap criticism... In politics, it often happens that people open the wrong door, and this is what is happening to those comrades who come out in defence of the working class, when we speak about its disintegration and they say that His Majesty the Proletariat is being insulted, when they speak about relations with the peasants. They believe that by doing so they criticize us from the Left, but in fact they engage in miserable, petty repetitions of what has been said by the Mensheviks... picking up Axelrod's hackneyed slogans..."

These words were also pronounced by Zinoviev at the 11th Party Congress. He was then able to take a broader view of the Party's social structure and considered the label of "axelrodism" justified; he even used it himself. By the 14th Party Congress, Zinoviev held an opposing view of those things.

Lenin believed there were two components that determined the Party's ability to act: the general membership and the top-level leadership. The leadership regulated the social structure of the membership, and the membership helped maintain the stability of the

leadership. Trotsky and later Kamenev and Zinoviev waged all struggles in the leadership only—they talked about the general membership only when they needed it for their manipulations. If this had not been so, Zinoviev would not have made the U-turn at the 14th Congress. The issue of the general membership was just where Stalin was preparing a strong attack against his last rival. Kamenev and Zinoviev were not aware of that, and they greatly helped Stalin. He followed the trail they had blazed. He strongly criticized the opposition, of course, in connection with this issue and all other issues. In fact, he had set a course that was opposed to the 11th Congress's decisions a long time before that opposition even emerged.

At the 12th Congress, when Lenin was still alive, the Party did not deviate from the course charted by the 11th Congress. In the report about the Central Committee's organizational work, Stalin said the percentage of proletarian elements in the Party membership had increased in 1922 not because a large number of workers had been admitted but because the non-proletarian elements had been purged, with an overall reduction of membership. By early 1923, the Party had 373,000 members (at the time of the 10th Congress, it had had 700,000). The resolution on organizational matters reiterated the Party's policy to restrain the growth of membership, despite the growing number of applicants.

There was no other way to keep the Party's structure proletarian, because there were few regular workers outside the Party at that time. If we accept Lenin's thesis that a peasant became a real industrial worker (and not a semi-worker) after spending at least 10 years at a factory, a great deal of time had to pass between the initial growth of the working class (1922-1925) and the time when those new workers had formed a large layer of new regular workers. These would be workers not

only formally but also in their mentality and behaviour. Therefore, the policy directed towards restraining the growth of the Party's membership (Lenin even said it should be reduced) was evidently to become a long-term one. This policy, however, was changed even before the Party held its 13th Congress one year later. At its 13th Conference in January 1924, the Party adopted a special resolution on Party development which included an intensive enrollment campaign to attract industrial workers into the Party.

It is curious that the 13th Party Conference is mainly remembered for the resolution against the Trotskyites, and one of the Trotskyites' main theses was that the Party's policy of development pursued in the two years since the 11th Congress (that is to say, the policy of restraining the rapid growth of membership), was wrong.

It is widely believed today that the Lenin Enrollment into the Party in 1924 was actually caused by Lenin's death. Therefore, it would be appropriate to note that this view was first expressed at that time by Preobrazhensky, a Trotskyite, and that Molotov ridiculed it as an idealistic view unworthy of a Marxist (in the report on Party development and organizational matters that he delivered at the 13th Party Congress). Molotov was right—not only because the enrollment of 100,000 workers into the Party had been planned by the 13th Party Conference several days before Lenin's death. He was also correct in that some flexibility was needed in pursuing the course set by the 11th Congress at regulating the structure of the Party's membership. The restriction of the admission of new members also had its weak points. The membership of the Party could not grow at a slower rate proportionately to the size of the working class as a whole for a long time. This obviously threatened to divorce the Party from the masses. The fact was that the governing Party had to

have its people in the leading positions of the local governments, unions, Komsomol, the national economy, and the armed forces. With membership being as small as it was, just about every Communist occupied a post of some importance. Indeed, by early 1924 workers composed nearly half of the Party membership. But those were mainly workers by origin, who had become Party functionaries, local government and union office workers, managers, or military officers. Fresh blood was needed; it was impossible to simply seal off the Party for years—such a Party would have grown into an isolated estate. But the membership structure had to be regulated. On January 1, 1924, the Party totalled 350,000 members, therefore, admitting an additional 100,000 workers would not be a problem—they could be gradually assimilated, educated, and elevated to the level of the Old Bolsheviks.

In his report at the 13th Party Congress just four months later, Molotov said that more than 200,000 new members had been admitted, instead of the planned 100,000. He did not say, however, that was sufficient. He said the enrollment campaign was a tremendous success and insisted that it should be pursued. He insisted that the portion of workers “fresh from the factories” be soon increased to at least half of the Party membership. A calculation similar to that later used by Stalin when criticizing Sarkis’s proposal would show that Molotov was proposing that another 200,000 to 300,000 new members be enrolled. According to Molotov’s proposal, by the end of 1924 the new members admitted in the course of that year would outnumber those who had joined the Party before 1924. But Molotov also said that some peasants and intellectuals should be also admitted and this meant that even more workers “fresh from the factories” had to be enrolled to maintain the proposed membership structure. The number of workers required far exceeded the



total number of regular workers then available in the country. This meant that Molotov was proposing that semi-workers should be enrolled into the Party. In that same speech, Molotov also said that the percentage of workers in the Party membership should be raised to 90. A year later this figure put the opposition under heavy criticism, when a member of the opposition group, Sarkis, mentioned it in an unpublished article. Unlike Sarkis, who proposed reaching the percentage in one year, Molotov did not specify how long it should take. Molotov, however, made the proposal 18 months earlier than Sarkis, when it was much more obvious that the task was unrealistic. Furthermore, Molotov did not believe that it would take too long to achieve this, for in the same speech he ridiculed the Party organization of the Ukraine for planning to ensure that workers composed "a mere" 65-70 per cent of its membership. He said this mistake should be corrected. There is no need to prove that Molotov was one of Stalin's men. Today it is a well-known historical fact, but it was obvious even at that time. In the early 1920s, Molotov had been placed in charge of the Party's organizational matters, formerly handled by Stalin himself. Molotov's proposals were, therefore, dictated by Stalin. This shows that in many major issues Stalin shifted to the opposition's views in 1928, but the structure of the Party's membership was the issue on which Stalin adopted the Zinovievites' views even before the opposition formulated them or, in any event, he quietly advocated those views under cover of the opposition's talk about them. He understood the significance of the Party's membership structure earlier than others, and he began acting instead of talking.

Curiously, none of the membership enrollment campaigns helped reach their alleged goal: the percentage of workers never increased. It was easy to put forward a nice slogan, but people were not admitted into the Party

in teams. Each candidate was discussed personally, and, in view of the nation's great social variety in the mid-1920s, the working class could not propose enough candidates who compared favourably with representatives of other social sectors. So, at the time of the 14th Congress, the leaders of the Central Committee majority, primarily Bukharin, had to speak about poorly prepared new Party members, whose number had grown too large.

Stalin was more moderate than Bukharin, but he was aware that Molotov's slogans had been advocated in 1925 by the opposition, so he cited many facts in his report at the 14th Congress showing that the Party's growth since the 13th Congress had been excessive. Stalin said the Party totalled 911,000 full and candidate members as of July 1, 1925 (compare that with 446,000 members, excluding those who joined during the Lenin Enrollment, as of April 1, 1924—the Party's membership had doubled in 15 months!). But the campaign continued; there were 1,025,000 members by November 1, 1925. A simple calculation shows that all the regular workers employed at larger factories at the beginning of the restoration period (700,000 in 1920) evidently joined the Party, since its membership grew from 300,000-400,000 in 1922 to over a million in 1925. As for the workers who took jobs at factories after the beginning of the restoration period, they could not be considered regular workers, according to Lenin, until the early 1930s. By November 1925, the Party comprised 25.5 per cent of all workers (not only regular ones) then employed at larger factories. The number of workers admitted into the Party grew more rapidly than the total number of workers employed at larger factories, so most of the workers who joined the Party simply hadn't had time to be educated by work at the factories. Even with this the percentage of workers in the Party's membership continued to decrease, the door by which new

people entered the Party was wide open. At the 13th Congress, Molotov said that the enrollment of 200,000-220,000 workers during the course of the Lenin Enrollment had raised the percentage of workers to 62-65; at the 14th Congress he stated that the admission of more new members had again pulled the percentage down to 57.4 (and those who were actually employed at factories comprised 38-40 per cent).

In his report to the 14th Congress, Molotov said nothing about the quality of the newly-enrolled membership. Some facts and figures characteristic of that quality were revealed by Stanislaw Kosior\* at the 15th Congress. Mass enrollment campaigns, including the first Lenin Enrollment (240,000 people were admitted), the second Lenin Enrollment one year after Lenin's death (another 75,000), and subsequent enrollment admitted 488,000 new workers into the Party before January 1, 1927. Of that number, 8,000 were expelled and 47,000 withdrew from the Party during that period. On the whole, more than 10 per cent of those people did not stay long in the Party. It can be added that, in all probability, there were many more who did not commit any misdemeanour that would cause them to be expelled from the Party and who did not withdraw but were utterly unable to formulate policy positions of their own.

Lenin wrote, *"An illiterate person stands outside politics, he must first learn his ABC."* One of the delegates at the 14th Congress, Zakharov, made the following revelation in his speech, "We have 28,000 people in our Party who don't know their ABC." That certainly was caused by the intensive enrollment programmes.

There was another aspect in the development of the working class during that period. As late as 1929, some

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\* Stanislaw Kosior (1889-1939) joined the Party in 1907.

workers who came from worker families and had been factory workers for 20-30 years at major plants, such as the Bolshevik and Kooperator plants in Leningrad, had large farms in the countryside and hired labourers. This showed that the ten-year period on which Lenin had insisted was no exaggeration, to say the least. The country's social structure became very motley following the Civil War and revolution: in 1926, for instance, the Krasny Treugolnik factory employed former officers of the tsarist army and former noblemen.

All this makes clear the fact that the enrollment of all or a majority of the workers into the Party could be regarded in the mid-1920s only as a very distant future prospect. But in 1925, Grigori Zinoviev quoted a 13th-Congress resolution that formulated a very vague time-frame for this goal (*"The time is coming close when the Party will comprise the bulk of the proletariat of our Union"*) and tried to prove that it was already possible to enroll all workers without exception. He said, *"What is the most characteristic feature of our working class? Could it be the fact that a tiny number of former peasants outweighs the majority? Isn't it the other way around? What is the reason for the pessimism concerning this fundamental issue?"*

All these questions inadvertently lead us to another: could these words be pronounced by the man who had explained so convincingly to the Party Congress three years earlier what the class disintegration of the proletariat was?

Later, attempts to even justify enrollment campaigns with references to some changes in the political situation ceased to be made. They were launched simply to mark the anniversaries of important events. The former theoretical correctness, which had caused Molotov to seek a Marxist justification for the Lenin Enrollments, was forgotten. An enrollment campaign was launched to mark the 10th anniversary of the 1917 October

Socialist Revolution, and Alexei Rykov was proud to tell the 15th Congress that 70,000 applications from workers had been received in the early weeks of that campaign. By the end of 1927, the Party had a membership of 1.2 million. Remember that only a few years earlier Lenin said that 300,000-400,000 was too many. The percentage of workers again decreased (from 58 to 56 per cent) by the 15th Congress, while the percentage of workers who actually had jobs at factories slid from 40.8 to 37.5 per cent. These figures characterize the membership of the Party that was to make the choice between Stalin and Bukharin a few months later. Bukharin never attempted to force the Party to make those choices and never organized debates throughout the Party or voting in Party cells, the way the Trotskyites and the Zinovievites did. At the time of the 14th Congress, half of the members of Party cell bureaus were Communists who had joined the Party in 1917-1920, but by the 15th Party Congress nine-tenths of local Party functionaries were people who had joined the Party in 1924 or later. As for senior Communists who had joined the Party before the revolution, their percentage grew among the leaders of provincial Party organizations. The upper echelon of the Party apparatus began to drift away from its lower echelon. (In just ten years Stalin led them so far apart that the lower echelon believed in 1937 that the upper echelon was entirely composed of enemies of the people.)

For several years, the Party comprised a great mass of people who had little or no political experience and theoretical knowledge. A mass that more experienced people, who had the apparatus at their disposal, found easy to mould the way they wanted. Moreover, that mass of zealous people often infected their leaders with the enthusiasm of young men.

Yakov Ilyin, a journalist and writer who worked for the daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and who died in the

early 1930s, left a remarkable description of the major features that were common to most workers during the period of the first five-year plan. He collected real stories about those who built and worked at the Stalingrad Tractor Works in a book titled *The People of the Stalingrad Tractor Works*. That book is a rarity today but Ilyin's novel *The Great Conveyor Belt*, reprinted in the 1950s, is largely based on the events and characters from that book. One interview in *The People of the Stalingrad Tractor Works* is titled "I'm Telling My Sons to Study." It is the story of a man who was one of the best builders' team leaders—a very talented but illiterate person. Another story is about an Erzia woman who was one of the best workers. She had come to the project from a village wearing bast sandals and was amazed to see running water.

Another chapter in the book is *Yes, We Broke Machine Tools*. The person who told that story was a Komsomol member who had worked at a factory in Moscow. But in Moscow he had seen 19th-century machines only, with one drive shaft high above, under the ceiling, and belt transmissions for each machine tool. It was at the Stalingrad Tractor Works that he saw an electric machine tool (US-made) for the first time. The machine was designed to work bronze and he wanted to see what would happen if he put in steel. His curiosity broke the machine.

Komsomol members were, at that time, very conscientious. No one ever arranged a household for himself—young people lived in communes. They pooled all the money they earned and everyone spent as much as he needed. It was all right to put on a friend's trousers and go to a dance, leaving the friend without trousers. It was wrong not to participate in an evening subbotnik, but it was all right to miss a regular day shift. One debate was held to decide if actions should be taken against bedbugs in the huts. The decision claimed

that Komsomol members should be above domestic comforts. That strategy was changed only after a visit by Alexander Kosarev (1903-1939), Secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee.

The workers' attitude to their living conditions determined their attitude to production. The laws of conveyor-belt production, forbidding heroism and haste, were difficult to understand not only for peasants but also for industrial workers with an obsolete mentality. They did not understand that they needed not only new machine tools but also a new mentality in order to produce 144 tractors a day (the design capacity). Smooth assembly work required standard parts, but assembly workers sincerely wanted to produce as many tractors as was planned or more, despite the shortage of adequate parts. So they even used inferior parts, repairing them slightly. The plant manager tried but failed to make the workers understand that inferior parts had to be returned to where they had been manufactured, if the workers really wanted to increase the output of tractors.

The construction of the plant progressed very rapidly, and the deadline was moved closer several times. In 1930s, the manager was sent to the United States to study the operation methods of US tractor plants. When he returned, the manager learned that the work staff, led by the committee of the local Party organization, had promised to launch the project another three months before the established deadline—by the 14th Party Congress. The manager was horrified and said this was impossible. He was told that the only thing that was really impossible was to rescind the promise, since it had been published in the papers. The Stalingrad Tractor Works was opened one week before the Congress opened—five tractors were assembled on the first day. On the day the 14th Congress opened, a delegate to the Congress who represented the Stalingrad Tractor Works

said that, in spite of what the "sceptics and whiners" had claimed, the plant had been opened two months before the last deadline fixed by the government. The manager had been wrong in saying that this was impossible.

But throughout the next month, the plant did not manufacture a single tractor. Throughout its first year of operation, the plant produced 30, 50, or 70 tractors a day (instead of 144). The manager was removed from his post. His successor increased the daily output to 90 tractors, but overstrained himself and soon was killed by a grave disease. The Stalingrad Tractor Works reached its design capacity under its third manager. Saving two months resulted in the loss of a whole year. The first manager had been absolutely correct.

How is it possible to blame those workers, whose enthusiasm infected not only their managers and Party leaders but even American specialists? How was it possible to expect people who had become workers not long before to become staunch proletarians and Communists without going through any growing pains? Those were remarkable people, fully dedicated to the cause of socialism. They had no experience, but they were gaining it very rapidly. A tractor plant in Kharkov, put into operation several months after the one in Stalingrad, functioned much more smoothly from the very outset, and the plant in Chelyabinsk, launched even later, operated even more smoothly than the one in Kharkov. But there was a time when the young, wild energy needed to be guided—that guidance would have helped avoid many problems. The leader of the nation, however, stepped on the gas when it was his duty to step on the brakes. Maybe Stalin was carried away by the nation's enthusiasm, just like Sergo Orjonikidze had, who believed for some time that enthusiasm could do anything? This is not impossible, of course, but what does it matter? Whether it was a genuine misconception



on Stalin's part or a cynical scheme to gain political advantages for himself by playing on the workers' misconceptions, when it was his duty to dispel them—this hardly mattered to Orjonikidze when he committed suicide in February 1937.

Stalin and Molotov, who loudly criticized the demand to admit five million workers in addition to the 200,000 that were members when Lenin was alive, quietly admitted just under one million new members (not only workers) within the four years between the 13th Party Conference and the 15th Party Congress. This was enough to make the senior Party members a small minority when the crucial battle for power had to be fought. The rank-and-file membership and the lower-echelon apparatus were dominated by junior Party members, for whom the Party's history at the time when Lenin had been alive was nearly as remote as biblical legends.

During the campaign against the Right deviation, between the 15th and 16th Party Congresses, the Party's membership grew by half (reaching 1,952,000). The campaign admitted primarily workers and the enrollment requirements turned the campaign into a replenishment of reserves for the battle against the Right deviationists.

**In the report on organizational matters** that he delivered to the 16th Congress, Lazar Kaganovich\* drew a very impressive picture, saying this: *"This increase in membership is in tune with our Party's policy slogans. What are the slogans that the workers advocated as they joined the Party before and what are their slogans as they join it now? In 1924, the workers followed the slogan, 'Let Us Make Our Party Strong. Let Us Compensate for Lenin's Death.' The workers who joined the Party in 1927, to mark the 10th anniversary of the 1917 Socialist*

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\* Lazar Kaganovich (b. 1893) joined the Party in 1911.

*Revolution, reiterated those slogans but also added in their applications, 'I approve of the Party's decisions concerning the Right-wing deviationists and I declare that I will strongly fight against the Right-wing deviation. I hereby request to be admitted into the Party so that I contribute to the construction of socialism in our country.' This is a quotation from the application written by a worker of the Vladimir Ilyich Factory in Moscow. More slogans were added in 1930: 'To fulfil Lenin's behests, the production and financial plan, and the entire five-year plan in four years, we declare ourselves shock-workers. The entire work staff wishes to join the Party' (a quotation from the application written by the staff of the Zarya Sotsialisma Factory). Therefore, the wording of the applications has been following the policy slogans advanced by the Party."*

Kaganovich certainly failed to appreciate the profound truth of the last phrase. Wishing to join the Party as an entire work staff (Kaganovich did not care to make even a formal comment on that) in order to fulfil the production plan and Lenin's behests—this kind of nonsense in the workers' minds could only be attributed to the fact that "the wording of the applications has been following" the policy slogans then advanced by Stalin. The first of the two applications that caused Kaganovich's admiration is just as significant. Even before he joined the Party, a person supposedly held an opinion concerning the Right-wing deviation. He considered that opinion to be the reason for joining the Party, and with that he was admitted. The debate with the Right-wingers was just a preamble to a person's life in the Party, and he reached the end of that preamble knowing in advance that the Right-wingers were wrong. When practice proved two or three years later that Bukharin had been right in everything he said about the first five-year plan, the people admitted into the Party in 1929 probably did not even notice it. They joined the

Party when only one side was able to express its views. As for Stalin's change in 1933, they took it as proof of Stalin's genius and not as a forced acknowledgement that Bukharin had been right.

Lenin stressed the importance of stability—a very accurate observation. Any neophyte is essentially unstable. Superficial knowledge is more dangerous than no knowledge at all. Sketchy knowledge stirs up activity but supplies no experience or education. People learn ideas but are unable to view them from a critical standpoint. Babies do not grow into adults all at once—they have to pass through adolescence. Even highly-cultured theoreticians, even Bolsheviks who joined the Party before the revolution were known to live through a dangerous period of misconceptions and errors; this refers not only to young Bukharin but also to Felix Dzerdzinsky and Mikhail Frunze,\* who were wrong in opposing the conclusion of the Brest Peace Treaty in 1918. This showed the dangers inherent in people who lacked political education, even if those people were front-rank activists. Ten years later, those dozens, hundreds, and thousands of people played a crucial role—and were much more politically experienced. At that time, however, they were followed by millions of new people, who had been stirred to political activity by the revolution but who, alas, were no longer guided by Lenin's wisdom.

**A major feature of the 1920s was the absence of adequate historical experience and of socialist political culture.** People proudly pronounced Vladimir Mayakovsky's words describing the USSR as a "young nation." No one thought in terms of decades; "one year from now" was far into the future, and "a decade from now" sounded like a hazy dream. That was a great advantage for the people who built socialism, but that

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\* Felix Dzerdzinsky (1877-1926) joined the Party in 1895. Mikhail Frunze (1885-1925) joined the Party in 1904.

was also their great weakness. People simply failed to understand the very concept of distant consequences. When Bukharin talked about the future consequences of rushing economic development, few people understood him. When Orjonikidze cited figures in 1929-1930 describing the successes of the first five-year plan, he sincerely believed that the figures disproved Bukharin's predictions made in *Notes by an Economist*; he even believed that it was possible to produce 17 million tons of pig iron in 1933. But when the economy confronted the longer-term consequences of haste and growth rates slumped as the nation completed its first five-year plan, it was Orjonikidze who proposed to the 17th Congress in 1934 that the pig-iron target for 1937 be reduced from 18 million to 16 million tons. That proposal was adopted, because the delegates had learned their lessons from the first five-year plan. The actual achievement was quite close to the target: 14 million tons instead of 16 million compares very favourably with the 1933 figures—six million tons instead of 17 million.

The problem did not end with ignorance concerning laws of long-term economic development (or, rather, it was a refusal to understand those laws: a majority of the Party members just would not listen to those who knew the laws). Also, no one could anticipate the long-term effects that organizational and policy decisions could produce on socialist culture, psychology, and tradition, that some specific decisions would develop into a certain type of culture and influence later decisions adopted in entirely different situations. For example, it was in the late 1920s and the early 1930s that the emphasis on large numbers was adopted as the norm and was subsequently taken for granted. In his speech at the famous joint plenary meeting of the Party's Central Committee and Central Control Commission in 1933, Orjonikidze cited some figures that he believed charac-

terized economic successes but which would be today considered by any keen economist as a clearly negative trend. Here are those "successful" statistics: the basic assets of the Moscow Automobile Factory had increased from 9.9 million to 53.4 million roubles in the previous five years, while the factory's work force grew from 1,900 to 15,000. Orjonikidze also cited figures for 23 other major factories, but he failed to formulate the obvious conclusion—the number of people employed was growing faster than the factories' basic assets. In other words, the figures for per worker fixed assets were decreasing and new technology was not contributing what it could to a growth in productivity. Economically, those employed had less value than basic assets or equipment: manpower was in sufficient supply, machines were scarce. This was the first step towards extensive management and it was followed by the failure to use machines to capacity. A combination of intensive and extensive growth factors is actually unavoidable during the initial phase of industrialization, but a politician should anticipate the inevitable effects this may produce on the standards of labour and management and should ensure that bad habits do not become permanent and that the possibility of returning to intensive labour remains. Orjonikidze soon perceived the dangers of the emerging work methods. He criticized factory managers whose workers never worked more than five hours in a seven-hour shift. Some tried to defend themselves by claiming that their personnel worked six hours in a shift, and not five hours. But no one ever argued that workers were busy during the entire shift—everyone knew that most factories had more workers than they actually needed. Orjonikidze failed to do away with that kind of labour standard—it proved to be strong and later developed into "over-employment," which is very difficult to oust, even with the aid of the current economic reform.

Labour heroism was taken for granted and led to regular emergency jobs. It can be seen from Orjonikidze's speeches that even the output of the Magnitogorsk plant varied between 1,000 and 400 tons of steel a day. As for the Stalingrad tractor works, the regular emergency shifts actually frightened Orjonikidze, and he told the management to stop all-night voluntary shifts on Sundays because the people had no strength left to work in the daytime. But before those emergency methods were discarded, people had to see for themselves that they were ineffective. In the meantime, low standards of labour were established, and a layer of specialists emerged who worked best in emergencies, were near useless under regular conditions and had, therefore, to be replaced.

Everyone accepted the low quality of growth and a system became established which provided economic protection for low quality output. The rouble became a "soft" currency, with an artificial, unrealistic exchange rate; pricing was centralized and prices were maintained on an unjustifiable level, regardless of the condition of the domestic market; a narrow-minded, bureaucratic interpretation of foreign-trade monopoly prevailed, providing artificial protection to unprofitable businesses; the general attitude towards planning and its role was narrow-minded; and the importance of economic incentives was not recognized. All these and many other provisions were needed to maintain a semblance of an economic balance, even though the quality of output was poor.

All those features in themselves are not always either positive or negative. It depends on whether those measures are taken when they are indeed needed, whether the people taking them are aware of the long-term consequences and whether they remember that those measures can be used for a limited period of time only. All the above-mentioned methods were used throughout

the 25 years of Stalin's rule, whereas their use was justified only during the six years of World War II (1939-1945). Only during those years was it justified to seek increased output at any cost, even to the detriment of quality. But Stalin made high rates of growth an end in itself for all time, without considering whether this was good or detrimental to the people. Correspondingly, justification was automatically provided for any measures that ensured or were believed to ensure high growth rates. As time passed, more and more people came to accept the fact that those measures were indispensable, that they actually mirrored the main economic advantages of socialism.

This barrier of mass psychology proved to be strong. Remember how boldly Khrushchev criticized Stalinism, how much determination he showed to wipe out the obsolete system of economic management and build a network of regional economic councils. In fact, however, the whole concept of Khrushchev's "revolution" remained within the narrow scope of the ideas bequeathed by Stalin and was little more than a restructuring of the administrative ladder.

Subjectivism and great faith in the power of orders and commands were accompanied by the view that people were one of the materials from which to build socialism and everyone seemed to forget that the people's well-being was supposed to be the ultimate goal of socialist construction. This gave rise to the darkest side of the psychology and culture of early socialism. Remember Bukharin's words in 1918 ("let the Germans put nose rings through their nostrils," all that matters is that they should fight the war; and: it doesn't matter if Soviet Russia should die, if its destruction brings on a world revolution). A few years later, everyone agreed that the kulaks, those helping them, and their families should be exiled, if that helped to complete the collectivization of agriculture in one year instead of five. At

the 15th Party Congress there was a significant debate between the People's Commissariat of Justice and the Central Control Commission—the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. When Orjonikidze's report was discussed, Nikolai Yanson,\* of the Central Control Commission—the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, said this: *"From what we see in the work of judicial bodies, I have come to the personal conviction that, apart from reforms, we have to carry out a small-scale revolution there (Solts: 'Right!') from the bottom to the top. Of course, the comrades working in the judicial bodies are supposed to advocate law, but sometimes that advocacy of law becomes pedantry. Sometimes lawyers say: if you have to die, die legally."*

Krylenko\*\*: *That is right!*

Yanson: *That's no good. In my opinion, it doesn't really matter if a person dies legally or illegally,—the result is the same. We believe that our legality should be structured in such a way to directly link it first of all with practical requirements (Voice: 'That's true.')*, with practical expediency (**Applause**)... Ever more workers are being incorporated into the judiciary, not only as judges but also as prosecutors and investigators. But there is still an enormous amount to do, and I believe that we'll achieve the best results if we structure judicial bodies in such a manner as to have a certain number of people with common sense and practical experience, people with a proletarian background (**Applause**)...

Solts: *And fewer lawyers.*

Yanson: *... who should be welded to our Soviet lawyers. For now we have a certain domination of professional lawyers, which is not very good for the cause of Soviet justice, which is an absolutely new form of justice as compared with bourgeois forms."*

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\* Nikolai Yanson (1882-1938) joined the Party in 1905.

\*\* Nikolai Krylenko (1885-1938) joined the Party in 1904.



Krylenko, who spoke on behalf of the Procurator's Office, had no way of knowing that many of those people who were applauding Yanson would face "an illegal death" only a decade later. So he argued against Yanson using Yanson's logic. He said the judiciary was not dominated by professionals, because 33.5 per cent of the lawyers were workers. What was more, a mere 124 out of the Russian Federation's 1,176 district assistant attorneys had a legal education; another 139 of them had a higher education (evidently, other than legal), 210 had a secondary education, and 690, a primary education; 236 had no judicial experience whatsoever. Nearly 100 per cent were members of the Communist Party. Furthermore, Krylenko did formulate the main question, "*After all, what is the main guiding criterion for the judiciary: do judges have the right to interpret and apply or not to apply any law in any way, as they see fit?*" His answer was that revolutionary expediency, meaning "do as you please," cannot replace the precise judgments of the Soviet government. Krylenko quoted Lenin, "*The Workers' and Peasants' Inspection judges not only from the viewpoint of the law, but also from the viewpoint of expediency. The Procurator must see to it that not a single decision passed by any local authority runs counter to the law, and only from this aspect is it his duty to challenge every illegal decision; he has no right to suspend such a decision; he must only take measures to secure that the interpretation of the law is absolutely uniform throughout the Republic.*"\*

No other speech at that Congress, except for those delivered by opposition delegates, was interrupted as much as Krylenko's. The debate actually centred on the attitude to law in peacetime—and, alas, the Congress did not support Krylenko's views. That was the main thing, even the Congress delegates, the Party's core,

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\* V. I. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 365.

were prepared to adopt an anarchist, semi-proletarian attitude towards the law, provided it was adorned with all the right epithets, such as "*proletarian*" and "*revolutionary*."

A relatively lengthy period of instability of the proletarian consciousness at the early stages of socialist construction should not be regarded as fortuitous or typical only of backward countries (nations with a large percentage of peasantry). This is not fortuity, but a social regularity, a feature of a particular phase in the development of the proletariat's self-awareness, that is, when it reaches a certain intermediate level. At this stage workers are already aware of their revolutionary class interests but have not yet gained sufficient political experience to enable them to completely overcome petty-bourgeois influences. They have discarded the old bourgeois culture but have not yet built a new, socialist culture. It is a phase **when the Party's role objectively is of paramount importance, when everything depends on its policy.** The Party's task is to lead the working class along the paths where its "backwardness" can be overcome and where a higher level of proletarian self-awareness can be reached with minimum losses.

## Stalin Acting Against Lenin

The road to the best quality of the new culture, with minimum losses sustained, is not always short nor is it always direct. That makes the governing party's task even more difficult and complex. Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) exemplified the correct course. Following the bitter conflicts with peasants during the mutinies in Kronstadt and Tambov, Lenin described NEP a few days after it was introduced as a special policy with regard to the peasantry. Indeed, NEP was a new beginning and the foundation of a large new building. On the whole, however, NEP was more profound and richer in scope, as Lenin showed in the next few months. NEP provided a kind of education and practical training for workers. Lenin was fond of words like "*study*" and "*learn*": he called on people to "*learn to trade*," to "*learn socialism from the organizers of trusts*," and in ***The Tasks of the Youth Leagues*** he called on young people to learn everything that world culture had created.

As he sought to take advantage of some features of that phase in Soviet history to promote his own interests, Trotsky was the first to address the young, whom Lenin regarded as a factor destabilizing the Party. Trotsky appealed to the youth as early as 1923. He was wrong in being the first to do that: it was too early to

strike because the young forces within the Party were too weak and unstable to overcome the Party's rock-solid core, even if Trotsky had managed to enlist their support. Stalin used the same method, but he did it when the time was right, when new people joined the Party in huge numbers. In the middle and late 1930s, the third stage set in: the influx of new workers was not yet as large as the mass of the working class which had taken shape within the period of the two five-year plans. This provided for stability, which did not have to be maintained by special efforts—in fact, special efforts were needed to upset it. Those who joined the Party in the late 1930s were not numerous enough to overcome those admitted during the late 1920s. Stalin wanted the generation of the late 1920s to be wiped out, because that generation of Communists and workers had gained considerable experience. Those people had learned the bitter lessons of the first five-year plan, which they fulfilled under Stalin's leadership. The most intelligent representatives of that generation began to understand too many things—Stalin sensed this at the 17th Party Congress, which probably came very close to replacing him as the Party's leader. Therefore, Stalin just couldn't afford to allow most of the people who attended that Congress to remain alive until the next Congress.

In the meantime, emergency provisions in political affairs were replaced by the 1936 Constitution and haste in economic affairs was being ousted by sober-minded calculations. People were learning to appreciate the long-term consequences of the decisions they made. They also were learning to ask questions: "Which of the problems that they encountered were the long-term consequences of previous decisions?" "Had it been really necessary to rush the nation's economic development in the late 1920s and the early 1930s?" and "Why did the country have to survive the famine of the early 1930s?" These questions would soon be asked not by the

“Old Guard” (then a tiny minority) but by the “Young Guard,” a heavy majority of the Party membership. That majority had no leader yet to express its consolidating new awareness, but there were quite a few candidates in the Old Bolsheviks’ second echelon who replaced Stalin’s eliminated rivals. Any of them (Kirov, Orjonikidze, Rudzutak, Postyshev, Eikhe, or Tukhachevsky) could become a dangerous rival any time. Possibly they were not yet aware of the fact and, therefore, Stalin had to act quickly, before they knew their strength. He had to eliminate those people, along with that layer of the Party membership whose ideas they would advocate.

But, it was possible to win the layer that was quite thick only through mass coercion. This explains the reason for the apparently pointless mass repressions launched in 1937. This also explains the naiveté of the belief that Stalin was deceived by Yezhov and Beria and that his trust in those people was a piece of bad luck. Stalin trusted those he wanted to trust, he selected the men who best suited his purpose. To make this point there is no need to examine their gloomy personalities. They were merely executioners, blood-thirsty killers. They received their orders from the prosecutor, and the prosecutor acted quite openly. Vyshinsky’s theories and Stalin’s famous thesis concerning the aggravation of the class struggle during socialist construction clearly indicate that **mass repressions were part of the general guideline.**

Let us examine Andrei Vyshinsky as a representative of a certain social force—an interesting one since Stalin selected to lean on him. The British journal *Survey* (a Sovietological publication dealing with East-West relations) published an excerpt from the memoirs of Iosif Berger in 1971. In the 1930s, Berger carried out important missions for the Comintern in several countries. The excerpt, describing Berger’s life in a prison camp, is

entitled "Inzhir" ("Fig"). Inzhir was the name of a prisoner whom Berger met in a camp in the Krasnoyarsk territory during the early postwar years. Inzhir told Berger that he had been a Menshevik who became a non-Party specialist following the 1917 October Socialist Revolution in order to await the collapse of the Bolshevik regime. He was arrested in connection with the trumped-up case of the so-called Industrial Party and escaped severe punishment by supplying false testimony against innocent Bolsheviks. From that time on, he considered it his cause to make Bolsheviks kill Bolsheviks, to write false reports against Bolsheviks and to see as many of them jailed as he could. Inzhir made a spectacular career for himself: when Nikolai Yezhov became the Chief of the GULAG (Camps Department), Inzhir became his chief accountant. But that career also killed him: when Yezhov was arrested, Inzhir was jailed and died in a prison camp.

Did *Survey* publish genuine memoirs or did it invent the story? Did Berger write the truth? Had Inzhir told him the truth? This cannot be verified. But even if the story is not entirely true, there is one important detail: Inzhir was a Menshevik. Remember that even when he said that it was possible to employ bourgeois specialists, Lenin never trusted Mensheviks. When the Party was purged, Lenin wrote that there were very few former Mensheviks among the Party membership but added that it would be wonderful to leave only one-hundredth of the remaining number. In his works Lenin used the names of many Mensheviks as common nouns to denote negative concepts (tseretelis, dans, zaslavskys, maiskys, etc.).

Zaslavsky, once a leading staff member of the Menshevik daily *Den* (Lenin's most hated publication), became a major staff member of the daily *Pravda* under Stalin. According to *Pravda's* senior workers, the editorial office's Party organization refused three times to

admit Zaslavsky into the Party. But they were forced to admit him when he received an official reference from Stalin himself.

As for Ivan Maisky, his research and diplomatic activity was certainly useful, but his luck was incredible. The former Minister of the Constituent Assembly's Committee in Samara became the Soviet Ambassador in London, and he survived the period when senior Bolsheviks who had been appointed ambassadors were eliminated one after another. Maisky managed to survive, but why then Raskolnikov could not survive.

By contrast, the former Menshevik, Mekhlis, did a great deal of harm. His "feats" during World War II have been described by several generals and marshals in the gloomiest terms. Unlike Zaslavsky and Maisky, Mekhlis was Stalin's confidential agent, who personally contributed to the failure of several military operations in which many people were killed. Also, Mekhlis received more important jobs than other Mensheviks. He was the editor-in-chief of *Pravda*, the Chief of the Red Army's Political Department, and the Minister of the State Control Commission.

The most terrible was the infamous career of Andrei Vyshinsky (his career was surprisingly similar to that ascribed to Inzhir in Berger's memoirs). Among all the former Mensheviks, Vyshinsky reached the highest post. Lenin would never have believed that a Menshevik, Vyshinsky, would act as the public prosecutor at the trial that would pass death sentences on three persons of the six he mentioned as the Party's most prominent leaders (Lev Kamenev, Grigori Zinoviev, and Nikolai Bukharin), on Nikolai Krestinsky, who was a Secretary of the Party's Central Committee during Lenin's time, and on other leading senior Bolsheviks! In 1923, anyone would have believed that such a trial would only be possible following a successful counterrevolutionary coup. Unfortunately, Vyshinsky not only organized and

conducted one major trial, he formulated the judicial norms for all the "trials" of 1937-1939 and the early postwar years.

We have examined the role played by several former Mensheviks in the history of Stalinism, without intending to assess Menshevism or some part of it. In the first place, such an assessment would lead us away from our subject and, secondly, a brief assessment is simply impossible. As any other Social-Democratic trend, Menshevism is a motley trend. Therefore, an unequivocal assessment is impossible—the very nature of Social-Democratic Parties is such that they may comprise very diverse and even mutually opposed trends. All the above-mentioned persons left the Menshevik Party after the 1917 October Socialist Revolution. They were former Mensheviks who did not want, however, to stay out of politics. They did what the 11th Congress of the Bolshevik Party had predicted they would do—they joined the governing Party, but did not fully absorb Bolshevik views; most likely some of them even remained hostile to the Bolshevik Party. Even that comparatively small group of former Mensheviks, however, cannot be unequivocally assessed. Moreover, it is quite unnecessary to formulate that assessment within the framework of the subject under review. The purpose of this digression is not to evaluate the Mensheviks but to evaluate Stalin, specifically by examining his attitude to Mensheviks. We see that Stalin's attitude to Mensheviks differed from that of Lenin and of most other Bolsheviks. That difference and Stalin's desire to lean on a force which had always been hostile to Bolshevism are significant in themselves.

Our analysis is nearly completed. We have seen how the events of the late 1930s had been foreshadowed by developments of the 1920s: the struggle within the Bolshevik Party and the struggle among various parties, and the actions of Mensheviks, Trotskyites, and de-



viationists. The strain of the bitter struggle for power and Stalin's desire to conceal his mistakes and to shift the blame for them on others explains a great deal about the repressions and Stalin's maniacal efforts to eliminate not only his personal enemies but also his close associates, from Kamenev to Tukhachevsky and even close friends, like Svanidze. This, however, still does not answer the main question: why was it necessary to repress so many people? Why did Stalin eliminate thousands of people who he did not know personally and were no danger to him? These questions can only be answered through an **analysis of the class orientation of Stalin's policy.**

That analysis clearly indicates that Stalin simply could not stop after routing the Party and removing its prominent leaders from the top echelon of leadership. His policy ran counter to the essential interests of the working class, even though the majority of workers were not aware of the fact and tended to view the negative aspects of the Stalinist course as the arbitrary acts, mistakes, etc. of local authorities. Even without a clear understanding of the general political developments, the working class was able to torpedo Stalin's policy by making numerous decisions on certain particular issues—in pursuit of its immediate interests, with the guidance of its class instinct. Therefore, Stalin had to strip the working class of its decision-making power. In Lenin's time, the working class had received a great deal of power.

One should begin with the criterion that presently determines the amount of democracy there is in a particular social system—the issue of the distribution of newly-created value. How much does the worker receive (as pay), how much do the factories keep (as profits), and how much does the State get (profit deductions, taxes, and so on)? The approach to the distribution of newly-created value is one of the essential differences





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In the photo (above): Stalin addressing the 16th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks), 1930.

between socialism and capitalism. No matter what important, alleged or genuine liberties may exist in bourgeois society, no capitalist can ever allow workers to participate in that distribution, not at his own factory at least, capitalists who do that are not capitalists any longer. The power to distribute newly-created value makes the capitalists the ruling class.

The class content of this economic issue was highlighted in Lenin's remark about a book by Bukharin: "Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production..." and differing in such a way that one group "can appropriate the labour of another."\* One year earlier Lenin provided a more detailed formula in *A Great Beginning*, but the above quotation emphasizes the essential feature; the opportunity to appropriate other people's labour. How simple: if the workers are granted the power to distribute newly-created value (within a factory and on a nationwide scale) they would not let anyone appropriate the labour of another group. So the **question of genuine democracy** (this refers to the socialist interpretation of democracy, not the bourgeois one, even though bourgeois liberties are important for the preservation of socialist democracy) **becomes the question of a type of social system**. How was that question answered before and after the great turn of 1928?

First of all, it should be noted that people should have some necessary information available in order to enable them to make decisions concerning the distribution of newly-created value. In the 1920s, the press regularly published price indices, subsistence wages, and other indispensable figures. Stalin turned subsistence wages and their relation to average pay into state secrets. He improved economic statistics about as much

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\* V. I. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 29, p. 421.

as Mao Zedong later did in China. The publication of *The USSR National Economy* yearbooks was resumed after the 20th Party Congress.

Also, workers should have the right to participate in making decisions about wages and salaries. During the 1920s, there was a simple and foolproof procedure, that is, each year wages were fixed in a collective agreement concluded between factory management and trade unions. This procedure was abrogated in the 1930s, so neither the trade unions nor the factory management, nor the People's Commissariats (Ministries) no longer had any significant power to raise wages; decisions concerning wages and salaries were made by a single central body, which was not directly responsible for the development of production and could not be influenced by trade unions.

To be able to really influence the distribution of newly-created value, workers should also have the right to influence production, because production determines the amount of value which is available for distribution. Objectively, this is one of the most complex issues, because efficient production is impossible today without centralized management. Therefore, complete self-management of factories would apparently be detrimental to the system of public ownership. This problem did have a solution in the 1920s: the country's top economic agencies then worked under the supervision of factory staffs.

At first, even the Supreme Council of the National Economy was elected—at national congresses of regional economic councils. In those years, regional economic councils were not the bureaucratic agencies of the late 1950s—they were part of local governments (Soviets), elected bodies of popular government. Furthermore, the right to manage the industrial potential of their territories gave a great deal of real power to local governments.

The right to elect leaders, however, does not necessarily guarantee that workers will have real power. "Ballot-box democracy" can be easily turned into a formal arrangement, with little practical significance. It is important to substantiate it with other measures, like democracy in economic affairs. This was also done. The New Economic Policy gave considerable managerial freedom to factories. By the end of the 1920s, factories had broad economic control over superior agencies: industrial departments formed by the Supreme Council of the National Economy were ousted by syndicates—managerial bodies that were special in many respects. Factories made their own decisions concerning affiliations with syndicates and they joined them as shareholders; boards of syndicates were elected by factory staffs. Syndicates fully depended on the economic support of factories and that support was determined by the quality of management provided by the syndicates.

As he rushed the nation's industrialization, Stalin destroyed the associations that had replaced the syndicates, the Supreme Council of the National Economy, and regional economic councils—he destroyed the entire system that exercised democratic management of the huge economy. That system has never been rebuilt anywhere in the world and is being revived in the Soviet Union today with perestroika, although the process is impeded by enormous difficulties. The man who was in charge of that system when it was at its best—the last Chairman of the Supreme Council of the National Economy, Orjonikidze—even before the 17th Party Congress became only one of the people's commissars for the national economy. He lost all practical control over the national economy; his personal prestige remained great, but it soon became obvious that personal prestige was not enough.

Eventually, factories lost all the economic rights which they had in the 1920s: the right to fix prices and

to make decisions concerning capital investments and their output. It is important to remember that Engels attached great value to the producers' control over their product. In the *Origin of the Family, Private Property and State*, he wrote: "*When the producers no longer directly consumed their product but let it go out of their hands in the course of exchange, they lost control over it. They no longer knew what became of it, and the possibility arose that the product might some day be turned against the producers, used as a means of exploiting and oppressing them.*"\*

Since commodity production remains under socialism, it is obvious that the alienation of product through exchanges is also unavoidable. But it is important to the workers how that alienation is organized and whether the actual producers participate in the establishment of prices and other terms on which their product is sold.

As for farmers, Stalin never managed to deprive them of the formal right to distribute newly-created value, but he did much to deprive them of that right in practice, confiscating all the produce or as much as he could from the collective farms.

Stalin fully usurped the rights of the Party and even the rights of workers and farmers and, predictably, he used the machinery of repression that protected his power not only against the Party's high-ranking leaders. It was impossible to arrest all workers and farmers at once (although the development of the GULAG system was a major experiment in which a special kind of "working class" was created) but, objectively, everyone could be dangerous to Stalin who violated the essential interests of both classes. Even without an open hostility to Stalin, the masses could undermine his economic policy—for example, by changing jobs too frequently (this indeed was a major problem that even Stalin could

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\* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 279.

not conceal). So, passports and residence registration were introduced, factory and office workers were denied the right to change jobs as they wished, and farmers were denied the opportunity to leave rural areas because they had no passports.

In examining the details concerning Stalin's relations with the working class, many statements must be formulated in the negative; people had no right to decide how many houses were to be built with the money they earned and where they should be built; consumers never decided what commodities should be manufactured, in what quantities, at what prices they should be sold, how many stores should be built or where. Well, it would be wrong to claim that the nation was so poor because all the decisions were made by one Great and Wise Leader. But who can say today how much earlier the nation would have overcome that poverty if the people's wisdom was not banned from the decision-making process?

Since the people were not involved in the decision-making process concerning the difficult issues (like the distribution of the meagre incomes) the impression emerged that the good decisions (annual reductions of retail prices, for instance) were made by Stalin—but of course those decisions were possible because of the people's hard work. Everything that the nation created was presented to the narrow-minded public as the Great Leader's gifts. Later, Stalin was praised for great military victories, scored in battles in which thousands of people fought and died. **Elimination of those stereotypes from public mentality remains a topical task to this day.**

It is no easy task to eliminate these numerous prejudices and carry out a profound analysis of the many complex and obscure phenomena of social consciousness. Take the famous "spirit of the 1930s." Why are the 1930s remembered as a time of joy, happiness, and heroism—the beautiful morning of socialism? This is



not only the result of the pleasant memories of the individuals who remember those times, they are also described that way in novels and stories written in those days by good writers (such as Kataev, Tretyakov, Kaverin, Olesha, Gorbатов, Ilf and Petrov, Fraerman, Tvardovsky, Isakovsky, Paustovsky, Gaidar, and dozens of others). Each of these writers was vastly different from all the others, but all of them wrote books that were similar in at least one respect—they were full of joyful enthusiasm. It is amazing that all the books about spies and enemies written in the late 1930s feature the concept of trust, and not the gloomy word “vigilance,” which became so annoyingly popular in the early 1950s.

Of course, there were people who viewed the 1930s very differently and described them differently in their works (for example, Bulgakov and Pilnyak). But there was no abyss of difference between them and those who represented the optimistic trend. Andrei Platonov knew—probably, better than others—the strength of the workingman (he described it in many of his works) and the strength of the workingman's enemies (described in *Gradov Town*). Even if we want to find out how and why that “spirit of the 1930s” emerged, we do not need to present an optimistic vision of that period as exceptional or unique. It isn't important if a majority of people had that vision or not. It is sufficient to be aware of the fact that a widespread, optimistic vision of life did exist in those days and it still exists in the memories of many people today. Some writers now claim that optimism correctly mirrored the reality of the 1930s.

It should be specified that all these references to literary works have nothing in common with literary analysis. These books and authors have been mentioned only as documentary proof that certain views and sentiments did exist during that period. We are interested in the particular phenomenon which existed in public con-

sciousness, rather than in the way this phenomenon has been interpreted by writers. The generation of the 1930s associates that period with the People's Commissar Orjonikidze, to whom ordinary workers found it very easy to speak, with factory managers who wore caps and not hats as most did later, with the universal habit to speak the truth without fear or apprehension. How could all this have existed in the 1930s if Stalin scored his crucial victory in 1929?

The fact is that Stalin had scored an organizational and political victory, but from a psychological and social viewpoint the victory was not yet won. Moreover, the inertia of social psychology worked against Stalin, especially because the change of policy he carried out was hidden from the public. Although they agreed to forget several names that had been popular in the 1920s, people did not give up their revolutionary ideas. The revolutionary spirit of the early post-revolutionary years cut its way through the period of the New Economic Policy, wiped out private entrepreneurs, absorbed the enthusiasm of the heroic labour of the first five-year plans, and finally found a permanent, democratic support for itself—the new working class. Just above that working class was a layer of senior Bolsheviks who had worked in Lenin's time. Those Bolsheviks communicated directly with the masses and whatever idea the masses had about the nature of government, it was formed by that communication. Dealing with senior Bolsheviks, ordinary men came to believe that Soviet government was indeed a government of the people. They had no idea what Stalin's top echelon group was like.

The contradiction between Stalin's new course and the medium-layer senior Communists' mentality threatened to create a danger in the future that could not be eliminated by replacing a few leaders: the whole medium-layer had to be removed. (Not all senior

Communists were like that, of course. Some adapted themselves to the new environment, still one could not expect that generation of leading Party members to have a rock-solid pro-Stalin mentality, so it was safer, Stalin believed, to eliminate that generation altogether.) Obviously, the change from the joyful "spirit of the 1930s" to the gloom of 1937 was horrible and unaccountably abrupt for the public consciousness; it was as shocking as a solar eclipse on a sunny day. As living standards improved, people found it increasingly hard to understand the type of a policy change which was being prepared. Even in jail, people spent a long time honestly trying to understand what was happening; they had no idea as to the scope of the repressions and refused to believe the things that actually happened to them.

This delusion can be explained only through an analysis of the Stalinist policy's orientation, an analysis that separates the essence of that orientation from the disguise of diverse and controversial facts. That essence becomes clear if Stalin's policy is viewed from the standpoint of Lenin's concept of classes.

Like the classics of Marxism, Lenin highlighted in his definition of classes the opportunity to appropriate other people's labour as the fundamental difference among classes. It is not important from a political standpoint whether Stalin used that opportunity personally—it is enough to know that he created that opportunity (this brings out the orientation of his policy). To preserve that opportunity, Stalin had to implement all those other harsh measures, including the elimination of bourgeois liberties in this or that form and the violation of individual rights. Those measures appear unpredictable and unaccountably sweeping, but they do not seem so mysterious from the standpoint of the purpose which they were intended to achieve.

History cannot be rewritten. The stage of early

socialist development in the USSR did fulfil its mission—not as Lenin planned it (within a reasonably short period of time and with minimum losses) but under Stalin's strong-arm leadership, with great suffering and huge sacrifices. Following the 20th Party Congress, Stalin came under heavy criticism. This, however, had one major drawback, that is, it centred on the repressions that Yezhov and Beria carried out for Stalin. Those repressions were Stalin's most horrible crimes and the nation should know all about them, but the truth about those crimes does not explain the essence of Stalin's policy. It overshadows what Stalin really wanted to conceal—the anti-Leninist turn of the late 1920s.

There are numerous documents which indicate that Stalin destroyed people in order to kill the ideas they advocated (or might adopt in the future); he was eliminating the previous political trend and consolidating a new one. Following the 15th Congress, Stalin revised all the major aspects of Leninism, and therefore, had to eliminate the people who knew what he was doing or might realize and resist it later. Those people grieved that they were innocent victims of false accusations, but they were not innocent to Stalin: he found them guilty of knowing too much, specifically about Marxism, and this made them potential enemies.

Let us sum up the results of that elimination of ideas. As he analysed the experience gained in the course of the revolution, Lenin advanced from the thesis of 1917 that *"socialism is merely state-capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the interests of the whole people and has to that extent ceased to be capitalist monopoly"* to the great idea, formulated in 1923, that socialism was a *"system of civilized cooperators."* The difference between state monopoly (even if it is non-capitalist) and a system of cooperators should be clear. Stalin developed state monopoly into a bureaucratic dictatorship founded

upon unlimited terror. Lenin developed the idea of workers' democracy in the Party and believed that people's government exercised through the Soviets (local governments) was the greatest revolutionary force. Stalin eliminated government by the Soviets as Lenin had seen it, as well as Party democracy. Stalin ignored or reversed many of Lenin's other guidelines, including those for economic relations, the policy regulating relations among various nationalities, etc. All this proves that Stalin was not simply eliminating his rivals in the battle for power—he promoted his own interests with the aid of a radical change of policy.

After achieving his main purpose (usurping unlimited power), Stalin did apply in practice certain elements of Leninist policy. For one thing, he did it for disguise, for the policy change of 1928-1930 was a family secret, guarded even more carefully than the genuine aims of the struggle against the "*enemies of the people*" in 1937. Stalin was also forced to follow some of Lenin's guidelines due to purely pragmatic considerations. For example, growth rates were not set as high in the second five-year plan as they had been in the first five-year plan, because the disastrous effects of haste in economic development had become too obvious. At its Seventh Congress, the Communist International revived the concept of a Popular Front which mirrored the universal trend towards the unity of the labour movement that emerged after Hitler had taken advantage of that movement's division.

Lastly, Stalin was simply unable to destroy all that he wanted to destroy. As he forced peasants to join collective farms, he planned to organize them into formations that would be as easy to manipulate as infantry companies. But he was unable to anticipate the inherent strength of a democratic organization that made its own decisions concerning the distribution of its surplus product and elected its own managers. Only

when he saw collective farms in operation, did Stalin realize that he had rushed the development of a force he was unable to control. Stalin's attitude to collective farms became a bitter hatred and never changed until his dying day. In his last work, Stalin called collective farms "*an inferior form*," because they were less responsive to his orders than all other forms. Throughout his life, Stalin did all that he could to suppress collective farms, especially by robbing them of produce and exposing them to hunger.

Stalinism could not be established as the only and all-embracing norm of Soviet society's life, but Stalin did his best to impose it as such. He sponged on the socialist revolution. Hence, the illusion that the two opposites were united. Stalinism and the revolution were always locked in what appeared to be a friendly embrace, but in fact the two opposites were constantly trying to overcome each other. The persistence of the illusion that the two opposites were united can be illustrated by examples from Milovan Djilas's book *Meetings with Stalin*. Djilas writes that Stalin was a "monster" and the worst possible criminal. But he adds that one has to "be fair" to Stalin. There was no other way of handling the problems that confronted the nation, no other way of governing the country, no one but Stalin could cope with all those problems, and Stalin was a matchless statesman of his time, the most prominent after Lenin. So here we go again: a bitter enemy of Stalin defends and praises him. Well, this is not uncommon...

This is the logic of any criticism that is not based on scientific analysis and such criticism often defends what it is intended to defeat. Likewise, the logic of defending allegations which are unsubstantiated by historical research makes them sound more like condemnation. Djilas makes the remarkably accurate observation that Stalin was one of those horrible dogmatists who is

prepared to destroy nine-tenths of humanity in order to "ensure happiness" for the remaining one-tenth. Even if people accept the statement that Stalin and the revolution are inseparable, this will hardly lead them to "be fair" to the "monster" but will probably give them a more negative attitude towards socialism.

Glasnost enables us for the first time to take a fresh look at many things that we continue to view from a Stalinist standpoint (without realizing it) and to separate the husk from the grain. If we blame Stalin only for the repressions in which many innocent people were killed, there is nothing to fuss about any more: we can't raise the dead. But if we believe that Stalinism's first victim was Leninism, there is still a great deal of work ahead.

The cult of Stalin's personality murdered the personalities of many people killing their activeness and initiative in both political and economic affairs. Stalin cultivated what can be described as a "no-roots" psychology, encouraging people to forget their past and, therefore, many people to this day credit all of the nation's accomplishments to the Great Leader alone. At the same time, Stalin created a social type of irresponsible and uncaring person. This is a multi-faceted social type, comprising people with parasitical attitudes to society, unreasoning doers, drones, envious people favouring wage-levelling, and those who feel free to steal from the factories where they work. This social type is far more persistent than ordinary Stalinists. People of that type need a Boss to shift responsibility to—not necessarily a Stalin, any government would do.

This phenomenon was described by Karl Marx as the people's alienation from ownership and from government. Stalin's choice for the Great Turn alienated people from ownership, and this was later substantiated by the public's alienation from political power. Was there an alternative to this? It should be first noted that

at the outset of the industrialization programme the nation confronted a danger that was all too real. The grain crisis of 1927 threatened to grow into a socio-political crisis—a new crisis along the revolutionary path selected by Lenin as the only one possible for Russia. Remember that Lenin's plan for the revolution provided for a lengthy period of alliance with the peasantry—the peasantry as a whole was not devoted to socialism and, therefore, the only way to deal with peasants was to try to meet their economic interests. For this reason Lenin included in the Decree on Land in 1917 a provision about distribution of land among peasants (earlier Marxists had found this unacceptable). This was also why he introduced a tax in kind in 1921 and later developed a plan for socialist cooperation, and even formulated the following conclusion, "We have to admit that there has been a radical modification in our whole outlook on socialism."

This difficult and inevitably tortuous path of revolutionary development, in a country of peasants led by industrial workers, certainly had to pass through a series of crises, large and small. Under Lenin's guidance, the Party resolved the extremely difficult crisis of the surplus-appropriation policy and the agrarian policy in general in 1921. The change from surplus-appropriation to a tax in kind outlined the principle of making concessions to the peasantry as the correct approach to these crises.

Yet during Lenin's lifetime, there emerged a financial and marketing crisis in industry which was, in fact, a crisis of the emerging socialist market. It lasted from 1922 to 1924 and was overcome some time after Lenin's death. There was a marked discrepancy between the prices of industrial and agricultural commodities, and this hampered trade—an indication that there was another crisis in the relations between the peasantry and state-owned industry.



After Lenin's death, the tax-in-kind policy faced a crisis in 1925; it was actually a new crisis of the agrarian policy and it was overcome through the intensification of the New Economic Policy. This time again concessions were made to the peasantry.

The grain crisis of 1927 reflected a contradiction between the economic aspirations of the peasants and the need to accumulate funds and resources for industrialization. The international situation called for the rapid development of heavy industry and there was little capital left for light industry. In view of the shortage of consumer goods, peasants did not sell their grain but waited for grain prices to be raised. However, in order to trade more industrial commodities for grain, the government had to transfer part of its investments into those industries which manufactured goods for the peasants. Was there a solution to the problem, other than coercion with regard to the peasantry and suspension of the industrialization programme?

It should be remembered that none of the earlier agreements between the Party and the peasantry ever blocked the construction of socialism. During Lenin's lifetime and after his death, a compromise was always found which met the peasants' interests while leaving the road to socialism open. The peasantry was open to compromises but, for its part, the Party had to show its readiness to make compromises and an ability to find them. Alliance was still the key word.

As the industrialization programme was launched, a good compromise could have been to alter the economic requirements of the peasants in such a way that they could be met through the development of heavy industry, rather than light industry. In other words, individual peasants had to be offered not only textiles, kerosene, and horse-drawn farming equipment but tractors, motors, and building materials.

That solution would certainly have been essentially

different from Stalin's—not only in its technological and economic nature, but also from a socio-political standpoint. Collective and state farms would have had to coexist with highly productive individual farms for a certain period of time. These individual farms would not have ruled out the establishment of large agricultural production units or industrialization, or socialist development. From the very outset, these farms would have been integrated into the nation's socialist economy. The only thing that could harm these farms were orders from outsiders. They could be properly managed only by their true masters and owners.

This solution was quite realistic—first of all from a scientific viewpoint. Now that the case of the Labour Peasant Party has been re-examined and Alexander Chayanov's\* works have been brought to public attention again, we know that this solution was found and substantiated by Russian scientists. It was also quite realistic from a political viewpoint; it merely required that the policy of alliance with the peasantry be pursued. Lastly, the solution was quite realistic economically. Of course, surplus-appropriation for industrial development would have had to be reduced somewhat, but we now know that the excessive accumulation of resources did not do much good for industry, either. At its 15th Congress, the Party set the correct guidelines, saying that the resources accumulated for industrial development should not exceed a certain optimum level; anything above that level actually impeded industrial development.

Responsibility rests with those who make the major decisions of historic significance. We know that the Party's leadership was collective during Lenin's lifetime. But we also know that many of the really important decisions were made or proposed by Lenin: in April

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\* Alexander Chayanov (1888-1937)—an agricultural researcher.

1917, he urged the Party to advance from the bourgeois revolution to a socialist one; in October 1917 he insisted on an armed uprising; in the spring of 1918, he ensured that Russia sign a peace treaty with Germany; in the spring of 1921, he had a tax in kind introduced. After Lenin, only one important decision was taken collectively by a group of the Party's top-level leaders: at the 12th Party Congress, they decided to ignore the proposal to replace Stalin formulated in Lenin's "testament" and Stalin remained General Secretary. As for all the later decisions, they were made by Stalin. He fought a long battle for power—first in alliance with a majority of the six leaders mentioned in Lenin's "testament," against Trotsky, and later in alliance with Bukharin against the rest. Stalin is entirely responsible for everything that happened from 1928 on, for all the people in important positions were appointed and fired, decorated or destroyed on his orders. The decision to make the fatal turn was proposed, advocated, and imposed on the nation by Stalin. He used that decision to eliminate his last rival and to consolidate his unlimited power. Stalin never shared his power with others and, therefore, the responsibility should also be borne entirely by him.

When farmers lease plots of land in abandoned villages today, the state of desolation they find there is amazing. Those villages are found in areas that were occupied by the Nazis during World War II and also in regions that the Nazis did not reach. The desolation and neglect have nothing to do with the war. They were caused by the Great Turn imposed on the nation by Stalin—the turn that crushed the peasants' initiative, diligence, and desire to work.

It is impossible today to forget the Great Turn as we try to appreciate the full meaning of one of Lenin's most significant phrases, formulated in one of his last works, as a final conclusion at the end of the great

revolutionary's life: "*We have to admit that there has been a radical modification in our whole outlook on socialism.*" Lenin, who had only a few minutes a day to dictate his last works, supplied the thesis with this very brief explanation: formerly we had to place emphasis on the political struggle, revolution, efforts to gain political power, etc., he noted, but now the emphasis is being shifted to peaceful organizational and "*cultural*" work.

To appreciate the full significance of these words, we should recall what Lenin wrote during the years when he actually worked to implement his revolutionary ideas.

It is true that originally Lenin shared the view, widely accepted for decades, that a socialist economy should be organized as a single factory. But he eventually formed the concept of socialism as a system of civilized cooperators. In only five years, Lenin understood what some people have failed to understand in seven decades.

It is true that Lenin regarded Germany as a model of plan-guided organization of production in 1918 (although he wrote about socialist enterprise as early as that, too), but at the end of his life he stressed the need to learn to trade and produced a formula so brief and plain that even Stalin could not distort it. Therefore, Stalin did his best to make the nation forget it. The formula, developed in Lenin's article *On Co-operation*, is as follows: Socialism is a system of civilized cooperators, and a civilized cooperator is a cultured tradesman.

Yes, Lenin started with political struggle, revolution, seizure of power, and revolutionary coercion. But in the end he formulated this categorical final phrase of the article *On Cooperation*, "*This cultural revolution would now suffice to make our country a completely socialist country: but it presents immense difficulties of a purely cultural (for we are illiterate) and material character (for to be cultured we must achieve a certain development*

*of the material means of production, must have a certain material base).*"\* This does not contain the slightest indication that the aggravation of class struggle during socialist construction is inevitable or any hint that the kulaks might have to be "dispossessed."

A contemporary researcher may well claim that Stalin the politician travelled a similar path in his ideological development. This may be true, but he travelled it in the opposite direction.

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\* V. I. Lenin. *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 474.

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